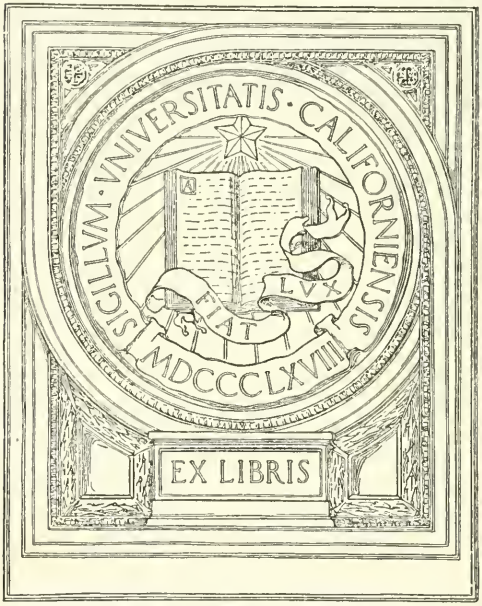
THROUGH SIBERIA

AN EMPIRE IN THE MAKING

RICHARDSON L. WRIGHT
BASSETT DIGBY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



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Siberian laborers. A photograph in which the different types of faces are of remarkable interest

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AN EMPIRE IN THE MAKING

BY

RICHARDSON L. WRIGHT

AND

BASSETT DIGBY

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PREFACE

WE wish to express our gratitude to the following friends in Siberia and Manchuria, who showed the greatest alacrity to help us see these much misrepresented and misunderstood lands as they really are: Mr. Reinecke, the American consular agent at Omsk; his son, Colonel Savlovski of Tomsk; and his courteous henchman, Trainer Tombeark of Salaiyeer; Mr. A. K. Speight of Tomsk, to whom, in large measure, we owe our information about the minerals and fauna of Siberia; the Danish colony of Irkutsk — Alfred Shonebeck, J. B. Johansen, K. Pade, Mr. Christensen and the rest — who extended hospitality to us in the Siberian metropolis and who, like Mr. Speight, gave up much of their spare time to furnish us with detailed information about the features and institutions of the country; Mr. and Mrs. Otto Vogler of Stretensk, through whose good offices we were able to obtain the ill-fated *Why Not?* and secured convincing education in the matter of running a little wooden boat through a series of unaccommodating ice-jams on the upper Amur; Mr. Simon Gordon of the Siberski Bank and the genial representative of the American Harvester Co. at Blagowestchensk in Amurland; a couple of unknown but eminently knowable young British officers of the Imperial Chinese Customs stationed at lonely posts on the lower Soungari; Ta Sin Shan, "boss" of the native Manchurian baiting house in the plague-stricken city of Tsitsitcar, who looked after one of us like a mother, and dieted him on the finest bamboo sprouts and the most luscious of sea-

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R. L. W. and B. D.

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THROUGH SIBERIA

Chapter I

THIRD CLASS INTO SIBERIA

THERE are two ways of going to Siberia, unless you are a Russian subject — in that case there are other and cheaper alternatives.

You can go from Moscow by fast train, which is slow; or by slow train, which is even slower. On the famous Trans-Siberian Express or the new Imperial Express, you can journey in the parlor car with the proverbially discordant piano; the French countess who eternally smokes the Crimean cigarettes; the plush lounges; the wealthy merchants who once made that journey shackled to a convict gang and grow loquaciously reminiscent over the vodkas you order them; the German staff officers bound for China; the adventuring American mining engineers, and a *tout ensemble* that glows with a gay cosmopolitan glamor. *C'est magnifique — mais ce n'est pas la Russie.*

It is not as easy as you might suppose to go to Siberia with the Russians in the third class of a slow train. Manfully our *istvostchik,* he who had driven us up to the Koursk Nijni-Novgorod station at Moscow, with a dashing carriage and pair, the courier of the Hotel Continental, and two white-aproned porters stood their ground and explained, with abundant gesticulation, that the thing was not done, was unprecedented, was out of the question.

However, we prevailed; and at half-past ten on Saturday morning, our long train pulled heavily out of the Moscow terminal of the Trans-Siberian railroad, bound direct for Tcheliabinsk, on the Asiatic side of the Urals, the gateway to Siberia, two thousand and sixty *versts* toward the rising sun.

The fault of the slow train in the Russian empire is not so much its modest speed — our train, on occasion, gathered the dizzy rate of fifteen miles an hour. What handicaps it is the unconscionable wait at each wayside station. There is a stop of ten to twenty minutes at the tiniest platform serving a group of rude log cabins, often without a single interchange of passengers. The stop is simply and solely for the passengers to get hot water for a brew of tea, or a snack of something to eat. The claim of the running schedule is utterly subordinated to the claim of the buffet.

Your tea is cheap and fragrant. At every station, the Government maintains a free boiling water depot for travelers on the railroad, and marks it with a conspicuous sign-board.

There was none of the conventional stiffness of demeanor on this train that you meet with in the Occident, nor was there the Oriental riot of squalor and filth that one has been led to expect from the tales that pass in America and England. Everyone fraternized. There was no expectoration, no drunkenness, no vermin.

The third class train to Siberia is more a suite of rooms than a series of railroad compartments on the European plan. From the wooden walls on every side folding back rests pull up or slide down into comfortable sleeping shelves. Each passenger, however humble, has his or her shelf, which, with a quilt, a camel-hair blanket or two, and a big, soft pillow, forms a lounge by day and a bed by night. You carry your own bedding on Russian

A third class food booth on the line of the Trans-Siberian

The railway stations have *kecpatoks*, or hot water taps, for filling the passengers' teakettles

trains. This applies to all classes. When the Russian gads about, he invariably takes with him, beside his entire family, half his household goods, which includes everything from blankets, sheets and pillows to scissors for cutting up sugar and to tea tumblers. Consequently our aisles were for the most part blocked with heaps of luggage. If one's legs got stiff and he craved exercise, he had little opportunity for it. He would invariably stumble against rolls of dirty blankets and dirtier pillows or kick over someone's tea kettle, an accident not without disastrous results and a prodigality of expletives. The *chainiks* were always half full.

The days were gloomy. Though the sun shone in an unclouded sky, a keen wind, coming up from the southern steppes, raised blinding clouds of fine snow for fifty feet from the ground. There were few idle folks among us, however. By day, with one accord, we all brewed *chai,* carved and shared our snacks of food, and exchanged cigarettes. From eight o'clock in the morning until nightfall there was always a brew of tea near by, and, kettle in hand, a couple of dozen passengers bolted up to the *keepatok* or hot water tap, as we slowed into each successive station.

Our train did not boast a diner, but food you could buy at the buffets or at the row of booths in which the peasant women congregate. Every sixth or eighth station has its buffet, sometimes with a better selection of dishes than can be found in many a city terminal in our land. The food at the booths was good and cheap — newly baked, fragrant rye bread at three *kopecks* (1½ cents) a pound; baked fish tarts, each as big as a plate, at two cents each, containing four small trout; whole roasted chickens for fifteen cents; nearly a quarter of a roasted goose, tender and well-cooked, for a dime; big jam turnovers for a cent. Small

wonder that the train to Siberia was one great picnic party during our waking hours!

The picnicking waned when night fell. When it had become quite dark, one of the conductors would come through the train, fitting in the two flickering candles that lighted each room. The few of us who wished to play cards or read bought little stumps of candle from a friendly conductor and fixed them on to five-*kopeck* pieces, that we stood on our shelves.

The young engineer student took out his paper-covered book of quadratic equations — that bugbear of youth! — and buried his nose in it. Two huge, fur-capped soldiers strummed away on their instruments, one a *balalaika* — a kind of mandolin with a triangular base — and the other a homemade, three-stringed, barrack-room fiddle. Eventually they came to "Yip-Ai-Addy," to which the Russians have a fearsome set of their own uncouth words, without a single lone "Yip" in the whole thing. The cosmopolitanism of "Yip-Ai-Addy!" The villagers of Holland were reveling in it when we had passed through a few weeks previously, and it had been a high favorite in Antwerp's Shrove Tuesday carnival that spring.

A Tartar woman, clothed like her Russian sisters, but, being a Mohammedan, with a thick white veil from brow to foot, crouched into the corner by her lame husband and young son. Next to them a dreamy-eyed man of thirty with hair five inches long; a man who moved gently and passed much time studying the faces of those about him. There was a sailor of the Russian navy, a linguist who could say "allri"— that convivial password! — and approved of our cigarettes. A bronzed old man, gray-headed but tall and big and active, with the physique of a Klondike miner, was there. With his two young daughters he was returning to Omsk, he told us, from a visit to

relatives at Syrzan. By his side sat a veritable Pied Piper of Hamlin. You will recollect his costume in the picture books — a conical green felt hat, a long, pinkish sheep-skin coat, a neck cloth flaming with scarlet and pink and salmon and orange, great pink felt boots to the thigh, boots embroidered with trailing red flowers.

Peasant women, dumpy and uncouth of figure, shawls over their heads, short-skirted and with felt boots to their knees, rubbed shoulders with modernized Russian women who wore hideous military jackets, fur toques tilted over the brow, and with execrably hung skirts. A pair of dwarfs, man and woman, bunched up in sheep-skins and gayly tinted shawls, neither of them bigger than a child of twelve, seemed to have walked straight out of a gnomish page of Grimm. By candlelight a tall, mop-headed student, his flat blue cap tilted rakishly over his ear, passed the time teaching a little fellow of ten to learn and repeat, *viva voce,* marked passages in a book of poetry. Such were our fellow passengers.

It took three nights and nearly four days to reach the Urals, three nights and four days of rumbling eastward through an ocean of deep snow that stretched, unblemished for the most part by even a trackside fence, from the metals to the far horizon. Add a few birches, fewer pines and firs, neck-deep snow that filled gullies and stream beds to the brink, swallowed bushes and shrubs and left the approach to peasants' low, mud-walled huts a clear-cut inclined plane diving into the bowels of the earth.

The drag up the Urals was long and exhausting to our wood-stoked engines, but when the top was reached the engineer threw out his throttle and we coasted down the other side into Asia.

A change of trains was made at Tcheliabinsk which is the first city of any size east of the Urals on the rail-

road. It was founded in 1658, the name being derived from the Baskir chieftain Tcheliab. For generations it has been an *etape* or clearing-house for exiles, but since Russia has gone seriously into colonizing her big side yard, Tcheliabinsk has become a distributing point for immigrants. The quarters for these settlers accommodate 2,000, and they are always crowded. A branch of the railroad, the first in Siberia, runs north from Tcheliabinsk and connects Tiumen and Ekaterinburg, thence crossing the Urals to Russia.

From Tcheliabinsk our train rumbled on again, skirting the desolate Khirgis, Ishim and Barbara steppes. The word desolate must be qualified. We were now in the Government of Tobolsk, the wheat district of Siberia, a region that by winter is barren and snow clad, but rich with crops in summer. Now and then we pulled up at towns that mark eras in Siberian development. There was Kurgan, for example, whose name signifies that it was the place an immense barrow once existed. No trace of it remains. To-day Kurgan is a city of 70,000, boasting a grain market, an immigrant station for the northwest Akmolinsk district, and four yearly bazaars that do $2,500,000 worth of business.

And there was Petropavolask on the Ishim river (that *sk* ending in the names of Russian towns, by the way, means they are situated on a river). Petropavolask, with 35,000 inhabitants, has a famous annual hide and skin fair. The natives of the Tobolsk Government have a weakness for fairs. There were 400 listed one year.

But with desolation outside, we found our third class fellow travelers far more interesting than the little towns we passed. And they, in turn, after the manner of Russians *en route,* gave absolutely no heed to the scenery beyond the windows. Enough for them that their

The blockhouse at Yakutsk

chainiks were not empty and that the car was kept clean.

The official cleanliness on our train was highly commendable. Every hour or two an assistant conductor, or the man who looked after the steam heating, passed through with a broom or a handbrush, assiduously sweeping up every cigarette-butt, cedar nut shell — cedar nuts are the peanuts of Russia — or scrap of rubbish tossed on the clean floor. And every two days, during an hour's wait at an important station, an old woman would come through the train to wash the linoleum.

Drawbacks? Well, there were several. The cars were kept too hot, generally at 72° Fahrenheit. On several occasions the thermometer went up to 85° F. and even higher. There were double windows, and three iron doors had to be passed before reaching the open air on the platform at each end of the car. Ventilation was afforded only by little traps in the ceiling that, at night, the Russians insisted on screwing down tight. No amount of argument could convince these simple folk that by morning our coach would rival the Black Hole of Calcutta for atmosphere. It usually did, but the Russians appeared not to mind it.

The mingling of the sexes in sleeping quarters was at first embarrassing. At Tcheliabinsk we had captured two bunks, an upper and a lower. The opposite seats were occupied by an old grandmother and a young girl. By day we sat face to face, hardly an arm's reach separating us. But not until the second night did we grow accustomed to this twenty-year old girl pulling off her boots and generally disrobing, though it was rather annoying when she took a notion to roll a cigarette about midnight and insisted on scattering half the tobacco on the face of the one of us who happened to be asleep on the shelf below.

Nor did the sanitary and washing arrangements in our

coach relieve the embarrassment at all. They were very crude. Men and women shared them alike.

One confusing note in all Russian railways is that they are run on St. Petersburg time. This necessitates an endless amount of figuring, and, unless one is a mathematical genius, he gets to the station either an hour too late for his train or a day too early.

There were many delays on the line. Often we were shunted off to a siding and lay there while the great Trans-Siberian Express rolled by. Once or twice we had to wait while *arrestante wagons* full of criminals and exiles were linked to our train. But the stops gave opportunity to wander along the track and chat with the natives who gathered around.

There was still another rather annoying feature to our third class train. Every hour throughout the day and three or four times during the night, the conductor and two assistants raked through the train with a fine-toothed comb, ticket clipping and inspecting. Thirty-one times were our tickets clipped before we reached Omsk. On the twenty-fifth occasion, we begged the conductor to clip them five times and then leave us in peace for a day, but he evidently believed in conserving his simple pleasures for a more leisurely enjoyment.

Thus passed the time until, a few hours short of five days after leaving the Moscow terminal, our train crept into the station at Omsk.

Chapter II

OMSK — THE COMING CITY

ONE would be inclined to call Tomsk the capital of Western Siberia — "Why 'Western'?" add the Tomskians, and greatly exaggerate their population — were it not for Omsk, 600 miles to the westward.

Both are big and thriving cities according to Siberian standards; that is to say, great clusters of log buildings, generally one story high and containing two or three rooms; next to no street lighting or paving; no art gallery; a park; three or four murders a week; a scattering of schools; and two or three shabby hotels, each merely a hive of bedrooms and a restaurant among the waiters of which are usually a murderer or two who have served their time in the dread *oblasts* of the frozen north.

Just now the claims of both Omsk and Tomsk are fairly evenly balanced. Omsk is the agricultural center, the hub of 2,000 square miles of fine pasture land: Tomsk is the office of the Altai Mining District, and, with its university and fifty-five other educational institutions, preeminently the educational capital of Siberia. There is a good deal of talk of the huge offices of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, a gem in the crown of Tomsk, being transferred to her rival city. At the best of times there is keen competition existing between the two, and wherever two or three Tomskians and Omskians are gathered together in a Siberian *vodka* shop there is usually trouble. The market porters of Tomsk nearly tore the clothes off the

back of an Omskian boaster one morning during our stay in the city.

Omsk, with a station three miles from the town on the main line of the Trans-Siberian, 1,870 miles east of Moscow, has a population in the neighborhood of 96,000. It was one of the first big bases made by the old-time Russian pioneer. To-day it has a large garrison in continual residence, varying in numbers from 5,000 to 20,000 according to local conditions and season. The garrison reaches its fullest strength in winter.

The city has one long, shop-lined street and a sprouting of muddy side alleys, a cathedral of St. Nicholas, three libraries, thirty schools, a large theater and a bad criminal record. The natives point to all of these with pride. Nor do they neglect to show you the old court prison in which Dostoievski, author of "Crime and Punishment," lived during his exile.

Through the heart of the town flows the Irtish River, the second great water system of Siberia, which makes Omsk the port of some 15,000 miles of navigable waterways. One can take a boat on the river quay at Omsk and travel north to the Arctic, south to the Mongolian border, west through the Tobol to the Urals, and east via the Ob, Ket and Kass rivers, the Kass canal and the Angarar to Lake Baikal.

On the bank of the Irtish, while we were there, was a stack of American harvesting machinery fifty feet deep, as high as a two story building, and 200 yards long, waiting for the ice to go out of the river before being shipped to farmers upon the northern steppes.

Siberia is beginning to realize the possibilities of harvesting machinery, and a great American harvester manufacturing concern, practically a monopoly of this field, is supplying huge quantities of plows and reaping

A view of the main street of Omsk, the coming city of Siberia

machines. The American harvester can be seen in all parts of Siberia — as far north as Yakutsk and southward on the edge of the Gobi Desert where camels draw the machines.

Omsk has four principal articles of export — skins and hides, meat and butter. In this respect Omsk is the Chicago of Siberia. To buy a wolf pelt in winter at Omsk, when the skin is in the finest condition, you have to pay three or four dollars. The ermine pelt now fetches two dollars. It could have been obtained for twenty cents less only a few years ago. Hare skins for make-up into spurious furs are in great demand.

The requirements of fashion were the cause of the greatest destruction in 1911 of wild animal life in the history of Siberia. The total returns of the fur trade for the country amounted to more than $3,200,000. There were 4,525,000 gray squirrels killed in the Siberian woods; the sales of the tails alone, used for boas and dress trimmings, amounted to twenty-one tons. One and a half million white hares were killed and 12,250 sables.

From this one might suppose that furs are sold for a song in the Omsk shops. The prospective purchaser, however, has an awakening in store for him. There is no fur making-up industry in Siberia. All furs go to the big German clearing-house at Leipsic or to Poland, and presently come back made into fur coats and stoles. Thus, in Omsk a fur coat costs more than it does back in Poland.

Centrally located in 2,000 square miles of excellent grazing land, Omsk is also a great meat and butter market. Last year it exported to Russia alone the contents of nearly 4,000 cold storage cars of meat. Consequently meat is very cheap for home consumption.

A glance at the household market prices shows the cost

of living to be rather normal in Siberia. In summer time meat can be purchased in the Omsk market for 8–12 *kopecks* (4–6 cents) a pound; in winter, only 4–6 *kopecks*. A dead hare costs thirty *kopecks* in winter, and you can purchase a pair of geese for about a *rouble,* half a dollar.

Potatoes are not much in demand in Siberia. The far less nourishing salted and pickled cucumbers are mostly consumed. The brined cucumber is to Siberia what the potato is to Ireland.

Each summer sees the establishment of a big watermelon market. Fine melons can be bought for the equivalent of a nickel. But now and again, when cholera and intestinal diseases make their appearance, the health authorities step in and forbid all melon sales.

The Siberian butter trade amounts to some 80,000,000 pounds annually. Prior to 1893 no butter was produced or exported; to-day it is Siberia's greatest article of export. The Government, appreciating the possibilities of this region, has established dairy schools at various points and is subsidizing them at great expense. The butter business is largely in the hands of Danish companies which employ agents to travel everywhere up and down country to watch conditions and earmark each season's supply.

In the square of the church of St. Nicholas at Omsk the traveler is shown a crumbling gateway that, a century ago, served as corner for the old stockade. Hardly until then, unless he has studied it elsewhere, does he appreciate that Siberia has annals other than the records of exile. Like the winning of our own West, Siberia's history is the tale of a new land with wondrous resources, a tale of natural expansion, of battles with nomadic tribes, of fearless adventurers and explorers, and then, with the coming of the engine and railways, the tale of a virgin country

opened up by the progress and the inventions of the past century.

The first mention one finds of Russian relations with the peoples east of the Urals was when, early in the Sixteenth Century, the family of Stroganovs of Novgorod, the great trading company of the day, attracted by some pelts brought to Novgorod by the Samoied tribesmen from Siberia, had a band of trappers accompany the returning Samoieds to their home country. From that time on the Stroganovs engineered a number of trading expeditions thither which brought great wealth to themselves and much news of the land to the eastward.

The man who led the first of these great expeditions, and whose name in Siberian history is quite comparable with Daniel Boone's in American, was Yermak Timokeiev, who, with a band of Cossacks sent out by the Stroganovs, pushed the Russian eagles the other side of the Ural Mountains. To-day Yermak's banner hangs in the Cossack church at Omsk, and a short distance down the river from that city the Government has raised a statue to commemorate his battles. His victories are further pictured in paintings on the walls of the University of Tomsk.

In the Seventeenth Century Russian traders and explorers made their way eastward, founding little strongholds along the trail, stations that to-day are the cities of Tomsk, Yeniseisk, Kainsk, Krasnoiarsk, Irkutsk, Yakutsk and Nerchinsk. The Sea of Okhotsk was reached by the Cossacks in 1639. By 1715 the post road from Moscow to the Sea of Okhotsk was a well beaten track. The natural waterways, the Ob, the Irtish, the Yenisei, the Amur and the Lena, had been traveled by hunters and explorers.

Serious colonization began toward the end of the Seventeenth Century. Post stations were built, farmers were sent out, and, after them, girls to marry, much as England

is sending wives to the farmers in her Far West to-day. The Altai Mountains were explored by mining prospectors in 1723, gold was found, and the first *cabinet* or government mine established at Kolyvansk. To the stream of immigrants joined many people who were discontented at home — religious dissenters, and the exiles.

The work of exploration was pushed actively in the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine II. By 1728 a party of explorers had discovered America via the Bering Strait, and islands in the Bering Sea were settled. Six years before the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Russian banner was planted over Alaska. Our own explorations at that time did not go much farther than the Mississippi.

For 300 years the post road was the only link that Russians in Siberia had with civilization. Not until Tsar Alexander III saw the strategic and commercial possibilities that only a railroad could afford, was there any change. By that time, 1890, the West of the United States was pierced with trunk lines and new towns were being added to the map weekly. But Russia was slow to build railroads even in her European provinces and it is little to be wondered at that her Asiatic possessions north of Turkestan, except for that short line from Tuimen to Tcheliabinsk, were unconnected until 1891. The imperial ukase then went forth saying that a railroad should be thrown across the continent of Asia "to facilitate communication between Siberia and the other countries of the Empire, and to manifest my extreme anxiety to secure the peaceful prosperity of the country." The Tsarevitch, the present Tsar, who at that time had reached Vladivostok to start on a long tour of Siberia, turned the first sod for the building of the Trans-Siberian. Siberia's growth can be reckoned from that 19th of May, 1891.

A party of Kirghize tribespeople seen near Omsk

The railroad was built at the rate of two *versts* (a *verst* is two-thirds of a mile) each day for the entire 8,136 *versts,* over 5,424 miles. There were thirty miles of bridges to be constructed, one of them, that over the Ob, half a mile long. The work was pushed steadily until the continent was spanned. The venture cost Russia $390,000,000 — ten million less than the cost of the Panama Canal — and its maintenance consumes an annual budget of $25,000,000. As an investment, it pays no interest, for to reach the status of interest it would have to carry 10,000,000 tons of freight annually, three times as much as it carries each year now. As a military asset, it proved its worth when, in the late war with Japan, Prince Hilkoff trained his troops and their stores across the continent of Asia to Manchuria on that single narrow line of rails. Double tracking was commenced two years ago and is nearly finished at this time of writing.

In spots, the present construction is not all that might be desired. The bed is often laid in swamps. The rails are light, and the embankments none too secure. Accidents occur regularly and will continue to occur until the entire structure has been strengthened. Faulty construction, of course, has much to do with the low speed of the trains; yet, from the latest reports of the reduction in time between Moscow and Vladivostok, it is evident that much has been done in the past year in the way of reconstruction. The present running time for the express trains from Moscow to Vladivostok is 8 days, 17 hours, 35 minutes, and from Vladivostok to Moscow 8 days, 11 hours, 35 minutes. The time of the ordinary passenger train between these points is twelve and one-half days, and from Vladivostok to Moscow eleven and one-half days. According to reports, it is thought that next year will see a further reduction of twenty-four hours in the running

time. The Minister of Ways and Communications hopes, before many years, to provide a six-day train from Vladivostok to St. Petersburg.

Several branch lines from the main trunk have been proposed — south over the old tea route through Kiakhta, Maimatshin, Urga via the Gobi Desert to Pekin. This will shorten by several days the distance between Moscow and Pekin and will open up Mongolian traffic and clinch Russia's hold over her new protectorate.

There has been projected and the route surveyed for a line to go northeast from Nizhneudinsk to the Lena, then southeast, skirting the end of Baikal, till it joins the Amur railroad near the junction of the Shilka and Argun, or the beginning of the Amur river. A branch line will run from Irkutsk along the west shore of Baikal and further connect the projected railroad. This line will open up the Lena gold fields and will provide transportation for the iron and oil now being found in great quantities on the northeastern shores of Baikal.

There is still serious talk in Trans-Baikalia and Amurland of a line to run south from Aigun, through North Manchuria to Tsitsitcar and the Trans-Siberian. Aigun is the Chinese port on the Amur, forty *versts* below Blagowestchensk.

As yet, the Amur Railroad is far from completed, though work is being pushed. This line will open up Amurland, connect Blagowestchensk, Stretensk and Khabarovsk, and, with the Usurri line from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk, complete the encircling of northern Manchuria by Russian railways.

At present the principal articles of transportation over the railroad are butter, meat, wheat, and furs. Were there light lines run off here and there from the main road — say to Minusinsk, to Semipalatinsk, and northward

through the steppes to tap the arable zone and convey these products — then Siberia would soon become a serious competitor of the United States and Canada, in the wheat market, at least. As it is to-day, great quantities of American wheat are bought by the Siberians. Siberia's greatest need is more railroads.

What this one trunk line has done for Siberia in population alone is astounding. Omsk in 1891 had 37,000 souls; to-day it has over 96,000. The original population of one and one-half millions in Siberia before the railroad came has been increased seven times.

Yet Siberia is to-day, and for many years to come will be, the zone of the railroad. To those who know the country as a whole, however, the railroad zone is an insignificant section of that great land.

It must be remembered that Siberia comprises some 5,000,000 square miles — almost half as much again as the United States — much of which has never known the imprint of the human foot nor ever will. It stretches far to the north, leagues beyond the Arctic Circle where tundras, or *urmans,* as the Russians know them, make settlements other than the fishing villages along the rivers out of the question; and much of the land in the extreme south is utterly unsuited for either agriculture or grazing, only occasional oases breaking the monotony of the barren steppes, oases with insignificant agricultural possibilities.

The most comprehensive view of Siberia, the view that will answer the questions of those interested in the future of the land, is the division into belts.

The mining sections are in the Urals (which officially are not in Siberia), the Altai, and Trans-Baikalia.

The arable zone lies between the fifty-fifth and fifty-eighth degrees of latitude, 250 miles wide and 3,500 long. It is a continuation of the black soil belt of Russia, and is

to-day the producer of Siberia's grain crop. Of this arable area only a small portion is cultivated. The section is visited by long droughts that have already spelled famine and will, in time, necessitate irrigation. The temperature ranges anywhere from 50° F. below zero to 114° above. The cattle on these steppes, thinned by the rigors of the climate, do not compare well with those of more favored climes. Often whole herds are killed by the cold.

To the north above the agricultural zone is the timber belt; and east are the *taiga* or virgin forests — swamps with a tangled growth of birches and red firs. Timber in the *taiga* has little commercial value as the pith is soft. The railroad runs through the *taiga* at many points, but only skirts the edge of the north timber belt. Corduroy roads are laid through the *taiga* in many places. Clearing is accomplished generally by fire; this is due to the poor supervision of those sections. Of the 63,000,000 acres of forest land less than one-half is under supervision.

At present Siberia's most important belt commercially is the arable zone. In the midst of it stands Omsk, Omsk with its butter trade, its meat exportation, its wheat shipments, its fur market and its banner of Yermak. In June, 1912, when the Perm-Omsk railroad was opened, the city was given further advantages for transportation. Omsk well deserves the name of the Chicago of Siberia.

The city of Siberia to-morrow, then, will be neither Tomsk nor Irkutsk, but Omsk. The United States Government, with foresight, recognized this years ago and established there her only consular representative between Moscow and Kharbin. The Tomskians also recognize this, but they surrender the laurel to their rival with great reluctance.

Chapter III

TOMSK — A CITY OF ORGIES AND EDUCATION

OVER a day's journey eastward of Omsk lies Tomsk. It is not on the Trans-Siberian. When the engineers who built the road visited the Tomskian city fathers for their contributions they were refused, it is said. Tomsk was the capital of Western Siberia, and the natives could see no reason for the mountain going to Mahomet. The engineers, thus failing to get their graft, pushed the trunk line on, erecting a little junction and calling it Taiga (in the woods!) and condescending to put a sprout forty-eight miles up country for the accommodation of such Tomskians as should care to leave their town.

It is almost worth a special journey across Europe and a substantial section of Siberia, to arrive in Tomsk on the Taiga night train. Far ahead through the darkness flares a group of tall arc lamps at a point on the rim of the great bowl in the bottom of which lies the city. As you approach you see scores of rude sledges, mere rafts of birch poles held together with twine, waiting in long rows along the edge of the birch coppice that skirts the station.

From the train we descended into picturesque pandemonium. Shaggy *moudjiks* flung themselves upon our baggage and hove out of sight. Deep snow lay under foot, and a heavy snowstorm was sweeping down upon the surging, shouting, cursing, shoving mob of fur-coated passengers and *istvostchiks* and plunging horses.

We found items of our baggage loaded on to three different sledges, and a ruffian with a guileful eye endeavoring to persuade our fox-terrier, Jack, to board a fourth. It is an education to get baggage away from a fareless Siberian sledge driver but, rather to our astonishment, we found that the enterprise can be achieved without bloodshed.

The sledge swung round, and off we dashed down the long hill through the birch woods to Tomsk. It is a steepish hill, three miles long, and our pair of horses galloped every yard of the way. Soon we arrived at the portals of the "Hotel Roosia," and, paying off the *istvostchik,* pushed through the treble swing doors into the hall. It was just after Sunday midnight.

Shades of a New England Sunday!

A uniformed band was blaring out a brassy march to the accompaniment of loud bursts of laughter and shouted greetings and the popping of champagne corks. In our fur coats and big felt hip boots we waited in what seemed to be the wings of oldtime Daly's. Around us floated ravishing creatures in high spirits and ultra-abbreviated crimson silk skirts. Sloe-eyed maidens, attired as for the ballet, flitted by to join peroxide blondes in tight pale blue knickerbockers; and bewigged fairies in fleshings dived hither and thither in the throng. Every now and again came a crash of broken glass or a prodigious stamping of feet from the long restaurant, the stage at the end of which was given up to vaudeville.

We stayed a couple of weeks in Tomsk, and the same sort of thing went on every night. If we entered the restaurant at half-past nine in the evening, we found the lights low and not a person present. The evening begins an hour later — and no one thinks of going home till three or four in the morning.

Tomsk, "a city of orgies and education"

The Siberian hotel, and, indeed, Russian hotels in general, have no public rooms, no lounges nor smoke rooms, libraries or parlors. There is simply the restaurant and your bedroom. So you find a stay of a week or more inclined to become tiresome.

The bedrooms, each of which is usually equipped with a big writing desk, a couch and two or three comfortable arm-chairs, in addition to the usual furniture, have sealed double windows, and nothing but a little aperture about four inches square to represent ventilation. They get horribly stuffy. If you summon the manager and point this out, he will send up a minion with a scent-spray, and the last stage of that room becomes far worse than the first. Warmth is derived from a big oven, half in your room and half in that of your neighbor. It is stoked from the corridor. Rough birch logs are dumped down at intervals along the strip of carpet passing the row of bedroom doors, near the flame-flecked hinges of the ovens, and from time to time a waiter or a chambermaid comes along to fire up.

Despite lurid tales from previous travelers in Siberia, we did not find a single flea in a Siberian hotel. There are a number of species of cockroach about on walls and floors, but these are harmless and add a pleasant air of animation to the lonely rooms.

The washing facilities of a bedroom in a Siberian hotel are annoying. There is never any pipe water supply. In the corner of the room you will find what at first glance appears to be a nickel-in-the-slot automatic machine. It holds a little basin, usually without a plug to stop the water running away. High up at the back is a triangular water receptacle, holding rather less than a quart of oily and unclean liquid. You espy something in the nature of a tap, but when you investigate its workings, you are

prone to get a needle-valve jet of water in the face, or you get no water at all.

In the former event, what has happened is that of the two ends of the valve tap, you have unwarily turned toward you the one that curls upward. In the other event, you ring the bell and are shown how to go to work. A maid or a porter strikes a match and exhibits, underneath the affair, a pair of small treadles, like the brakes in an automobile. Preparing for a wash, you have to find these and press on them with your foot. So long as you keep one foot on the treadles, a thread of water spouts from the valve. The basin having no plug, the water stops with the removal of your foot. Cleanliness in a Siberian hotel is not next to godliness; it's next to impossible.

After seeing these crude washing facilities one learns with surprise that the Siberian really does wash. Each city has its public bath and swimming tank. Saturday is the day for universal ablutions. A Saturday visit to the municipal bath is a revelation to the foreigner who considers the Muscovites a race having never known water. Nor is washing confined to the city dweller. Even in the humblest hut one discovers the facilities, crude though they are. The country process consists in heating stones red hot, dashing them with water, and standing in the steam that rises. A general soaping follows, then the entire body is beaten with a bunch of birch twigs dipped in hot water. The foreigner's conception of Siberian uncleanliness, however, is possibly justified by the exterior filth of most of the natives; for after having bathed and scrubbed and soaped and thrashed the dirt off, the native puts on again the same clothes he has been wearing all week — or all winter.

One of the most interesting features of Tomsk is the great market on the bank of the Tom. Its wooden booths

are permanent and there are hundreds of them. Here you will see exposed for sale mirrors of shining tin, and stacks of the gaudily enameled treasure chests in which the Siberian peasants lock away all the little knick-knacks that might brighten up their cheerless homes: big chests of paper-covered booklets, chiefly plays of an amateur theatrical *genre,* and the popular crudely colored wall prints that did so much to keep up the spirits of the peasants when Russia was suffering reverse after reverse in her war with Japan.

There is a print that shows the assault on 203 Meter Hill, a Meter Hill covered — needless to say — with mangled Japanese picturesquely spouting up to the heavens in the lurid whirlwind of an exploding mine; Russian soldiers, nonchalantly holding aloft great bowlders of ironstone half the size of a piano, preparatory to hurling them down upon their enemies.

In another print you see a young red-shirted Russian peasant lout, sprawled at his ease on the greensward, who smilingly stretches out his fist and knocks in the head of the Japanese admiral who is perching rather insecurely on the slanting deck of his cruiser. A Japanese battleship is foundering in the foreground, while — happy touch! — Russian ambulance orderlies are pulling very gory and battered Japanese sailors out of the water and attending to their wounds.

In a quieter vein are colored prints, anything up to five feet square, showing the seven ages of man from the christening font to the grave; Alexander II's liberation of the serfs; the present Tsar, the Tsarina and their little family looking, with the tints the artist has bestowed on their garments, remarkably like a group of the gaudier type of Atlantic City August week-enders; affecting scenes in a young peasant's courtship; Old Testament sacrifices

with plenty of blood; polar expeditions with spearmen and walruses and white bears and the whole Arctic outfit of optimistic romance.

Around the market squat women, nearly snowed under, mere bundles of rag-wrappings crouching over baskets of mean wares. If a peasant fancies that he is specially gifted in the field of successful retail commerce, he has a good chance, at Tomsk, of testing his prowess in the market. There are dozens of men and women, each of whom presides over an outspread bale of wares that consists merely of a few old lamp burners, a battered picture frame or two, a single boot that has seen better days, and a scrap of frayed oilcloth. Nor are they neglected by the more prosperous passerby.

There are arcades of hides and arcades of fish and butter. Both are frozen. If you want a little less butter or half a fish, it has to be hacked away with a hatchet. A booth had a small deer standing by it. Jack, bent on the chase, was very disappointed to find it happened to be a frozen corpse. To and fro, among the buyers, passed seedy men peddling jack-boots, a pair or two over their arms.

In a bleak corner overhanging the bank of the Tom, stands the little eating-house of the poor — not the red brick house with the green sign-board, but the humbler plank structure the other side of the pony market. There it is twenty degrees of frost outside, though it is the last week in March, and a keen north wind doubles the cold. Within, past the double swing doors, an overheated barn of seething humanity, a row of three rooms with their dividing walls removed. In the center room, a big iron stove is in the middle of the floor, dogs sleeping around it. Behind the stove, a counter of coarse provisions and an arched passage leading to the kitchen.

The University of Tomsk

The imposing front of the Institute of Technology

At one end of the barn, drinks for nothing — with limitations. In America, we have the free lunch counter, where one can buy drinks and get a lunch for nothing. Here you buy lunch and get free drinks, a nip of burning *vodka* — the Russian white whisky — and hot water for your tea-brewing. At the end of a long table stands a great brass hot water urn, the *samovar*. Ranged eight a side are the peasants who have come in to market with their rude sledges loaded with produce or logs.

They are very dirty and very happy; their garments are an extraordinary sight. A patchwork pure and simple, a patched medley of sheepskin, rabbit pelt, sackcloth, scraps of grimy linen and flannel and shoddy cloth rags, sewn together with string and frayed twine. The forlornest derelict in a Bowery bread-line would be a Beau Brummel among them. They have each a paper of food, which they supplement with the fish and snacks on the counter, and, of course, further rations of *vodka*.

At the other end of the room, seated at small tables, are the better class customers, hackmen and market porters for the most part, as dirty as the peasants but dressed in good, if shabby, coats, with gaudy girdles around the waist. Entertaining them are the musicians — a derelict with bandaged stumps where his hands should be, accompanied by a well-dressed little girl of fourteen who plays a discordant harp; a disreputable peasant youth, who also has a harp and plays it even worse; a lad with a one-legged hurdy-gurdy strapped round his neck; and three Jews with an accordion.

An old woman finishes a glass of tea, smacks her lips, and pulling out a paper of tobacco, proceeds to roll and light a cigarette. She throws a contemptuous glance in our direction. You see, we are smoking briar pipes. Only the lowest Siberian peasant will smoke a pipe: it is

the badge of social degradation. If you see a man smoking a pipe you can place him at once.

The little girl sings a song, accompanying herself on the harp. Her papa goes round with the hat. The hurdy-gurdyist has his turn. Then there is a squabble between the three Jews and the youth who is not a Jew. The company sees to it that the latter prevails. He produces a familiar yet elusive melody that in time one realizes with a start is a gallant attempt at "La Petite Tonquinoise." He follows it by "Yip-Ai-Addy," a strange and pathetically distorted "Yip-Ai-Addy," but recognizable.

The Jews lead off with, of all tunes in the world, "Two Lovely Black Eyes." We discovered subsequently that "Two Lovely Black Eyes" is a universal favorite throughout Siberia. Wherever you pause to listen to a group of peasants enjoying a little accordion concert, there you will certainly hear this ditty.

The beggars are an interesting feature of the market eating-house of Tomsk. The swing doors fling open, and in they stride. After warming their hands at the stove, they walk to the counter and cross themselves. Instantly the bartender hands over a large lump of bread — not stale bread nor crusts; perfectly good new bread. No remark passes on either side. The beggar drops the gift into a tattered rent in his garments, crosses himself and departs to the next eating-house. It is an eminently business-like transaction.

There are other beggars one likes less, blue-cheeked, shivering little mites of girls, bare-legged, their skirts in rags, who have only just enough strength to push back the heavy door. Often they have no coats nor cloaks, and the snow is their only shawl. They go direct to the counter, too chilled to heed the inviting glow of the stove. The numb little fingers make the Sign of the Cross, and then,

hugging the precious slices of bread to their bosoms, the children turn and shuffle away, out into the snows.

And there was a plausible old ruffian who slid a folded slip of paper under our saucers, and strolled away to the other end of the room. At first we thought he was a local betting tout with a "sure thing for the three o'clock" to throw away for a dollar or two, for it is a cosmopolitan type. We unfolded the paper and brought to view the label of a medicine bottle. You cannot mistake a medicine bottle label in Siberia. By the requirements of the law it is the big, coffin-shaped label that you see, if we remember rightly, in "Struwelpeter," illustrating the doctor's call on Cruel Frederick after he had been "kickin' th' houn' aroun'," with disastrous results.

Presently the old man came back. We made our contribution. He received the twenty-*kopeck* piece without a word of thanks, took back his label, folded it up again, and slipped it under someone else's saucer, strolled to the window, gazed out into the snow for a while, returned and collected — and picked out another philanthropist. Enough money was collected in that poverty-stricken eating-house to buy a number of bottles of any old medicine. Then the afflicted one took his departure. We met him later in the day in the brick restaurant. He was doing even better there.

Tomsk is the home of the only university in Siberia. Founded in 1880 and opened seven years later, it now has a very creditable attendance, which has been considerably underrated, by the way, by writers on Siberian affairs. The private scholarship endowment fund in 1911 stood at $2,500,000. The library contains 110,000 volumes.

The University is non-residential, students having to find their own quarters in the town. Fees are very moderate, 100 *roubles* a year. The year is divided into two

long terms. There are two "schools," medicine and law. The former is the more important, and with it are connected splendidly equipped anatomical laboratories and a bacteriological institute. It is under the auspices of the medical school of Tomsk University that the only Pasteur treatment available in the whole of Siberia may be obtained. Rabies is often rife throughout northern Asia, and there are almost always sufferers from mad dog bite under treatment at Tomsk.

The University affords no courses in history, literature or dead languages, though there is a strong agitation for the establishment of a chair in history.

Nominally quite a separate concern, but practically affiliated with the University proper, is a great Institute of Technology, a school of mines. Like the University, it is government-built and subsidized. It is divided into three departments, mechanics, chemistry and civil engineering, and furnishes a five-year engineering course of ten terms, as compared with the four-year course to be found in the United States and Britain. The year opens in September, with the enrollment of some 1,700 students, but by January a couple of hundred have usually dropped out for some reason or other. Many students have to leave on account of home bereavements and straitened circumstances, though the attendance fee is only $25 a year. A hundred students come in free every year, with government scholarships. Fifty students can win, during their attendance, scholarships to the value of $150 a year; in addition to which there are various private and municipal scholarships. The students furnish their own food and clothes, and live in town lodgings. There is only one small dormitory in the college buildings.

Now where do all these students come from? Curiously, quite a large number from the faraway Caucasus,

On the bank of the Tom is the crowded and active pony market

in southern Russia. The Caucasians are splendid warriors but poor students, prone to indolence and a lack of alacrity in catching the drift of what technical text books have to say. They find it difficult, in very many cases, to pass the necessary entrance examinations of Russian universities. The entrance examination of Tomsk is a low intellectual hurdle, and the Caucasus has discovered the fact.

The Caucasians are the "foightin' Oirish" of the Russian empire. "Faith an' Oi don't know what mebbe th' gov'nment here," remarked the legendary stalwart of Cork, on landing at Battery Park, "but Oi'm agin it annyways."

That is the attitude of the Caucasian. It is not so much the righting of grievances that he craves — though his people have plenty of pitiful wrongs that rankle painfully — as the pleasure of stripping off his coat and hurling himself, on principle, into a real, satisfying rough-house.

From the University of Tomsk, Caucasians are often "sent down," or, more grimly, sent up — up to the prisons of the frozen north.

There are hundreds of the sons of the poor *popes* or village clergy at the School of Mines and the University. The brightest students come from fertile Amurland, to the north of Manchuria.

We were told by the genial dean of the Institute of Technology, Prof. L. L. Tovey — who is of British extraction and speaks excellent English — that American mining engineering text books are very largely used at Tomsk. "They are the best in the world," he added; "such works as those of Saunders, Richards of Harvard, Storms of California and Peel of Columbia." File after file of United States government mining reports line the shelves of Professor Tovey's study.

In addition to the University and the Institute of Technology of Tomsk, a "People's University" has been projected, and buildings are in the course of erection. Its inception is due chiefly to the generosity of M. Makymisar, the owner of the biggest bookshop and the great private circulating library of Tomsk, who three years ago presented the city with the sum of $50,000 for this object. Large private and municipal donations followed. The details of instruction had not been planned when we left Siberia, but the underlying idea is to educate the masses at nominal, if any, charges, probably along the lines of simply phrased and interesting lectures.

The students of the Tomsk University have dramatic and literary societies, but participation in their activities is rather desultory. The students are too poor to indulge in the social life that forms so pleasant an adjunct to the 'varsities of more favored climes.

The Institute of Technology has the excellent system of recommending such students as so desire, to suitable employers, during the long summer vacation, so that the lads may obtain an insight into the practical side of their work in time to realize what branches of their university studies need special attention. The employers find them keen and valuable aides, and pay them a fair salary during their engagement.

It may be of interest to the reader, at this point, to take a glimpse at the much misunderstood system of elementary education in Siberia. It is among the average man's numerous misconceptions that Russia has very few schools indeed; and Siberia none, nor any prospects of obtaining better schooling than that of the knout and the onslaughts of wolf and Arctic cold. It is true that the latest statistics give eighty per cent. of the people in Siberia as illiterates. Nevertheless there are schools a-plenty.

At the foot of the ladder comes the *Narodnija Utchilistcha,* the national free elementary school, attendance at which is optional. It teaches practically nothing more than the three R's, and that is about as much as the budding Siberian peasant's sluggish wits can cope with yet awhile. This type of school exists in all but the smallest and least accessible villages, and is decidedly on the increase. We saw several, during our journey across Siberia, which had been opened recently. The physical exercise equipment — the jumping horses, climbing-poles, parallel bars, swings and so forth put to shame the normal run of American and British rural schools.

Then there is the *Realnaja* (the German *Realschule*), with a curriculum of history, geography and mathematics, the subjects being divided into their physical and commercial aspects. The *Realnaja* is not met with in the average village; it occurs chiefly in towns and big villages. Attendance is optional and free.

Next comes the third of the three free school systems of Siberia, the *gymnasium* (the *gymnase* of France), found only in the towns and cities. History, literature and the higher mathematics are taught. French and German are voluntary; English cannot be taken. German, by the way, is a good deal the most common foreign tongue used by Russians in Siberia. A very fair knowledge of it is possessed by almost all postmasters, army officers, government officials, mining engineers and educated men and women in all walks of life. French and English are much less often encountered. But to return to the *gymnasium.*

Latin and Greek are compulsory and are rather overdone, according to some of our informants. In 1880, Count A. Tolstoy, cousin of the literary Leo and at that time Minister of Education, became obsessed with the idea

that in copious doses of the dead language classics would lie the dissipation of the Russian Empire's social unrest, and that their study would foster a spirit of conservatism. So he dealt out Latin and Greek with a liberal hand, and the rising generation, much to its disgust, still has to stagger along under his legacy.

The *Kommerscheskaja* are privately owned trade schools. The courses of mental instruction are much easier than those of the *gymnasia*. They occur in the big towns and cities, and are largely filled with the children of well-to-do Jews.

In the national free schools of Siberia, only from two per cent. to five per cent. of the attendance is permitted to be composed of Jewish children. That is little, if any, hardship in the villages, where the Jews are rarely to be found. But in the towns and cities, the position will not right itself. Great numbers of Jewish lads are on the waiting list of every school. Prospects are bright for the Aaronsons but very glum for the Zalinskis, as the authorities generally fill up vacancies alphabetically by taking the first batch of names on the list. However, like the disappointed theatrical super, who after having acted as Xerxes in a bankrupt company, the alphabetical division of whose assets only managed to get as far as Menelaus, refused to sign on again in any other capacity than that of Achilles or Ajax, the wily Hebrews of Irkutsk and Tomsk frequently change their names when their lads begin to go into knickerbockers and thus avoid the expense of having to send them to private schools.

All the Siberian schools, free and otherwise, are well attended. In many cases to-day they have to work on double time schedule, detachments of the same class being taught during two or three different periods of the day. There is considerable agitation for more schools, but it is

Two newsboys of Tomsk

Everything of Siberian usefulness can be bought at the market in Tomsk

not the much maligned Russian Government, in this case, which constitutes the opposition; it is the *popes* or village priests of the Orthodox Greek Church.

The municipalities of Siberia are not illiberal in their support of the public schools, a generous percentage of the city budget going to the maintenance of those institutions. Irkutsk, for example, appropriates ten per cent. of the entire income to this purpose.

All pupils in the government schools are obliged to wear uniforms. The boys have dark blue suits, gray overcoats piped with blue and trimmed with brass buttons. The girls wear brown frocks, black aprons and black hats. The last, incidentally, are severely plain and not at all conducive to the general good looks of the girls. On holidays and celebrations, the girls put on white aprons.

The city of Tomsk used to have a theater, a fine building, but it was burned down during the reactionary riots of 1905, when, with the adjoining offices of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, it was fired by strikers and students. They stoned and beat the railroad and theater clerks and employees as they made their escape from the blazing buildings. Over sixty were seriously injured by missiles or burned to death, on November 20th of that ill-fated year.

Small stages are to be found in hotels and the Engineers' and other clubs of the city. There are infrequent performances by traveling companies at the city assembly hall. Now and then comes a dramatic lion from faraway Moscow. It is interesting to learn that Hamlet and King Lear have recently been played and that they met with an enthusiastic reception. No German opera makes its appearance at Tomsk. Performances run chiefly to Ibsen and the leading modern Russian and German dramatists.

Moving picture shows are plentiful and popular in modern Siberian cities, and Tomsk is no exception. All classes of the community attend them. Professor Tovey told us that he considered they had a most valuable educational influence among the poorer, illiterate and idealess classes.

Tomsk has three of the twenty newspapers Siberia boasts — two dailies and a weekly. The chief daily is *Siberian Life,* a subscription to which costs only seven *roubles* a year, a cent a day. A certain number of copies are sold on the street for as much as the boys can get for them, which is generally four or five *kopecks.* Both dailies are morning papers. If any particularly appetizing *bon bouche* of news comes over the wires during the day, it is struck off on a handbill. These enjoy ready sale as "*Telegramma,*" by street newsboys. You pay a cent for a bare announcement of four or five lines.

An amusing incident in connection with the "speshul extries" of Tomsk occurred while we were there.

Early one morning came in the startling report that the Russian minister at Pekin had been assassinated; it was at the time of the Russo-Chinese crisis.

One of the papers at once rushed a handbill through the press, but before it was distributed, came the official denials from Petersburg and Pekin. In keeping with the best journalistic traditions of the Occident, the editor had the denials printed on the second handbill. Then he called all the newsboys into the inner office, explained the situation with the utmost candor, handed out supplies of each bill to the eager lads, and told them to run the streets, crying "Horrible Assassination," until the "Horrible Assassinations" had sold out. Then, after resting up for ten minutes, they were to open a chorus of

"Startling Sequel," and proceed to sell out all their "Startling Sequels." And they did.

The weekly of Tomsk, *Siberian Truth,* is alive with enterprise. Politically, it is reactionary in tendencies, but since a former proprietor shot the last young reporter whose revolutionary effusions of soul led to an entire issue being censored out of existence, its political utterances have been guarded.

Siberian Truth is strongly anti-Semitic. It specializes in fearless denunciations of Jewish scandals, with the result that no Hebrew in the city will on any account miss an issue, lest he may not find himself cognizant of the circumstances attending the bringing of the latest lamb to the slaughter.

Press censorship in Siberia ranges from merely a slight inconvenience to a gross tampering with the right of fair editorial comment and even the publication of blameless news reports.

One cannot help admiring the audacity of a recent press censor who had to decide what was good for the 120,000 souls of Irkutsk to read over their matutinal rolls and coffee. One night, through the wires bridging some thousands of miles of desolate Siberian steppe, came the news from Moscow of the failure of a big trading company of Kiev. Now the censor held some thousands of *roubles'* stock in that company. With autocratic indignation, he blue-penciled the report as it came in from each newspaper office — and next morning, bright and early, he disposed of every *kopeck's* interest he held in the sinking ship of commerce, to his unsuspecting neighbors, before the bad tidings had had time to get far by word of mouth — for of course, he could not censor the tongues of the angry newspaper men.

In proper hands, the censorship is never abused and is productive of very little friction with the newspapers. When the paper is ready to go to press, proofs have to be sent round to receive the censor's signature. He rapidly runs through their editorial and foreign news columns, and a few minutes later they are returned to the waiting assistant editor, or some such responsible member of the staff. An editor of standing is allowed a good deal of latitude as regards the insertion of "stop press" news of importance, received after the censor has retired for the night, and very often the friendliest relations exist between editor and censor. Until recently, the press censorship of Tomsk was vested in the hands of Professor Semislikov, the principal of the University.

It would be difficult to find any nook or cranny of Siberia which does not preserve the memory of some great romance or romantic tragedy, but Tomsk makes a bold bid for priority in this respect. Her modest boast is that Alexander I, Tsar of All the Russias, passed his declining years a humble hermit, dwelling in a little log hut below the Alexis monastery. The story runs like this:

On the sudden death, in 1801, of his father, Tsar Paul I, Alexander succeeded to the throne, inheriting a war with France that during his reign saw the great raid of Bonaparte, whose fire scars may still be seen at Moscow. Trouble piled on trouble. Concentrated, Russia might have prevailed in her struggles. But her strength was tapped by invasions of the Swedes to the north, of the Turks to the south, of the Austrians to the west. Yet Alexander had the pluck to dream of, plan for and hold intact, a vast united Russian empire. Late in his reign, disappointments came thick and fast, with such sickening menace that he failed to see them in their proper perspective. He could not bring himself to realize, as posterity

The old stockade gateway in Omsk

The heater in a hotel room is stoked from the hallway

has realized, the larger triumph that loomed behind the worrying, petty reverses.

At last, worn out with the anxieties of battle and administrative fracas, he left his capital and went down to a quiet country place in the Crimea to rest. At Taganrog, so men believed, he died. His body was taken to St. Petersburg and entombed.

But Tomsk claims that Alexander, dejected at his failure to reach his ideals of peaceful administration, secretly abdicated, and had the remains of a peasant who had died of rheumatic fever sent to Petersburg for the state obsequies. For years, the old Tsar wandered through the villages of southern Russia: it was before the days of photographs and emperor-hunts instigated by enterprising evening newspapers, you must recollect.

There was nothing to lead the ignorant peasants to suspect the holy man's identity. Presently he found himself at Tomsk, at that time only a collection of rude log cottages in the center of a great grain reservation. He was given a little wooden hut at the foot of the hill capped by the Alexis monastery.

There, as a hermit, lived the stranger. He crossed his threshold only to perform some act of charity. His kindness brought him great renown throughout the surrounding country. As "Theodore Kuzmilch," he was visited by hundreds of admiring pilgrims. He used to nurse the sick and bring bread to the hunger-stricken. On one occasion, "Theodore" nursed a cholera patient through his illness, when no one else in Tomsk dared to go near the dwelling of the afflicted man.

Thus it came about that when the benevolent old hermit died in 1864, a public fund was raised to preserve his hut and raise a befitting mausoleum over his remains in the little graveyard of the monastery.

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Soon afterward, a wave of intense excitement swept through Tomsk. A Jewish leather merchant of the town told how a maid-servant in his household had received a letter from a village in the Crimea, from her dying brother, once one of the guards at the retreat where Tsar Alexander I was supposed to have breathed his last. Some years previous to the writing, this brother had suddenly left the army and set himself up on a very snug farm, with plenty of costly stock and fittings. No one had ever been able to ascertain how he had come into the necessary funds. In his last letter, he told his sister that he had derived his fortune for having held his tongue over the disappearance of the Tsar and the substitution of the peasant's corpse.

The servant girl had been so frightened at the disclosure that she immediately burnt the precious letter. Not a fragment of it remained. She was seen by several of the leading townsmen of Tomsk, and she stuck to her story. There does not appear to have been any incentive for her to have concocted so extraordinary a story out of her own inner consciousness.

Then matters took another dramatic turn. A farmer living fifty miles up in the north, happening to hear of the rumor, came down to Tomsk and stated explicitly that "Theodore Kuzmilch" had once told him of his former imperial status, swearing him to secrecy.

And three pilgrims recollected an incident that in the light of these revelations, took a new significance. One of these men had stirred the heart of the old hermit with a recital of brutal injustice at the hands of a certain military governor. The hermit had sprung to his feet, his eyes flashing, his head thrown back. Drawing himself up to his full height, he crashed his fist down on the rude

wooden table, and cried, "Then that man shall be removed."

It was not the petulant, grieved manner of an old priest of humble estate. It was the imperial wrath of a great soldier and a man of boundless power, a man accustomed to his word being law.

To-day Tomsk is quite unanimous in its belief that it is honored by the tomb of a hermit Tsar; and in Irkutsk, the capital itself, the general consensus of opinion is the same.

The hut that sheltered the monarch is hidden away from the street by a high board fence. Inside another enclosure, up a court and through a wicket gate, there, very like a rustic summer-house, stands the little two-roomed log structure, nestling under the broad eaves of a protecting shed. Not a stick has been changed or removed since the day of the death of the hermit Tsar, says the *pope* who keeps watch on the spot.

A double-barred door in a dark porch, with a top bar on which one bumps one's head, opens on a tiny hall that in turn leads to the room so famed for its erstwhile occupant.

In one corner is the Tsar's trestle bed, ascetically hard. Here Alexander I died. By it is a shelf, bearing ikons presented by the faithful. The walls are of bare oaken plank. Rough-hewn beams support the roof. They are studded with scores of ikons and framed religious prints. Candelabra and lamps swing before them. By the little window hangs a censer, half filled with glowing charcoal. Wreaths of artificial flowers are here and there, contrasting tawdrily with the solemn, candle-smoked countenance of the ikons.

The most interesting features of the room, perhaps, are

the several portraits of Tsar Alexander I that hang on the walls. They show him as a young man in his prime, and, again, resplendent in military uniforms; and the portrait of "Theodore Kuzmilch," painted shortly before his death, by one of the monks of the Alexis monastery. The resemblance between the old hermit and the famous Tsar is quite marked. There are the same great domed forehead, the wide brows, the tall stature and the broad shoulders.

As Russian shrines go, the tomb of the hermit Tsar is simple. It is a small building of stucco and brick, under the shadow of the monastery church. Graves surround it on all sides, though its cross rises high above the strange decorations that are concomitants of Russian burial grounds.

In the center of the mausoleum stands the flat tomb. Lamps burn upon it, and on the window sill, the morning we were there, stood an amusing contrast with the pathetic romance — an ugly can of kerosene for replenishing the memorial lamps, a can marked with the superscription of John D. Rockefeller's family business.

One evening Mr. Speight, a prominent mines agent of Tomsk, who speaks excellent English, asked us to meet Colonel Savlovski, the owner of the biggest stud farm in Siberia, discoverer and concessionaire of the new Baikal oilfields, extensive coal and other mines, and a well known personality in Siberia.

A judge of the high court of Tomsk was present. He was anxious to know if tallow candles were still believed by Americans and Britons to be the principal foodstuff of Siberian society.

We were offered some cigarettes of Turkestan tobacco, roots of Maryland stock with which tentative experiments are being made much after the manner of tobacco raising

in Ireland. The experiment is succeeding. At any rate, a good deal of tobacco is being produced, though we found it unusually nasty. The Government has fostered the Turkestan tobacco industry by giving growers a lease of thirty years' freedom from duty, but no exportation is yet allowed.

We fell to talking of the stud farm and horses in Siberia. They told us that, on the passing of the notorious Race Track Bill a few years ago which put the stopper on all serious racing in New York State, a great number of valuable American race horses were brought over to Russia where they have been much admired.

The native Siberian horse is a very tiny animal as compared with our mounts. He is not much larger than a Mexican burro, has a shaggy coat and is very sure-footed. We found, by later experience with these little beasts, that they make excellent mounts, and when put between the shafts can drag their load long distances through snow and ice and over muddy roads.

"A popular fallacy," the Colonel said, "is that Siberians do not ride horseback. They do. In Central Siberian towns and along the railroad zone generally, not many equestrians will be seen, but once off the beaten track, you will find more peasants on horseback than afoot or in wagons. Riding horseback is not an accomplishment with them, it is one of the commonplaces of life. Everybody rides, rides astride — babies of four and five, their elder sisters, mothers and grandmothers. Nor is horseback riding confined to the peasants," he continued. "The better class people in the cities go in for the sport."

Later in our journey, at Blagowestchensk-on-Amur, we saw girls riding every day. They were from the fashionable families, and they too rode astride and rode well, though their habits would have caused much comment in

Central Park. To detail one we saw — she was a flaxen-haired girl of about twenty, a pretty little thing with rose cheeks. She wore patent leather boots, pale pink riding breeches, and a jacket of emerald green with tails that floated out behind her as she cantered along. The hat we do not quite recall.

The day after our interview, the Colonel invited us to sledge down to his farm in the Salaiyeer Mountains. And so, after a fortnight's stay in Tomsk, we departed, not without some regret, for whereas Tomsk has suffered losses that Omsk has gained of late years, the tone of the city is far higher and more cultured than the tone of its commercial competitor to the westward.

Chapter IV

SLEDGING SOUTH TO THE SALAIYEER MOUNTAINS.[1]

I LEFT the Trans-Siberian line at Tootalskaia, a village a few hours' journey west of Taiga, the Tomsk junction forty-eight miles below the city.

They brought round to the door a sledge, not one of those pretty skate-runnered, enameled, picture-book affairs that glide so smoothly up and down the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow, but the big, shallow, cross-country Siberian sledge. It had no seat. Its runners were a pair of more or less parallel birch poles, just plain wood. More crooked, gnarled branches formed the floor. They were tied together with odd scraps of twine, birch bark and horsehair cord; nails would jerk loose in a day or two. Among the tangled branches was set a big scallop-shell of interwoven willow branches. The shell was full of hay and straw. In you crawled and sat or lay at full length during the journey.

There were two horses, a puller and an outrigger. Both had the high wooden Russian collar towering over their necks, three bells tinkling from the painted peak.

We dashed through the village, across the frozen Tom, and up on to the bare, storm-swept steppes. It was a desolate run, only an infrequent sapling of birch to break the monotony of the snow-smothered landscape. The track

[1] The journey to the Salaiyeer Mountains was made by Mr. Digby while Mr. Wright was at Irkutsk.

or "road" was merely a string of horse hoof marks, with neither bank nor hedge nor post to indicate its function. Once we passed a string of six ponies, tugging laden sledges. A man drove the first; all the rest followed, driverless, at regular intervals.

Wayside incidents were few. I noticed a pair of ptarmigan. They relied on the perfection of their protective coloring until we were almost upon them, and even then they did not trouble to take to the wing; they merely scuttled back to the shelter of a patch of birch scrub.

Presently we came in sight of what at first I took to be a trap of some kind, but on nearer approach I found it was the ribs of a horse, the rest of the body — what there was left of it — buried under a slight mound of snow. All around, the snow was disturbed by the tracks of hundreds of clawed feet; a red, gnawed leg bone lay a few yards away.

Sunset that evening was very beautiful. The unclouded blue sky paled to a delicate sea-green, and etiolating, threw a primrose sheen across the snows, a sheen that shed a cloak of cream over the slim trunks of the wan birches.

At dusk we came to the village of Popayretchnaia, and drove to the hut of peasant Vintofkin. His guest apartment was a tidy little room adjoining the general living, working, sleeping and dying room of the establishment. It was carpeted with a rough homespun cloth of the texture of sacking, patterned in squares of vivid hue. Big wooden tubs of flowering shrubs stood around the walls. As I stripped off my furs and snow boots, the toothless old grandmother brought in the very latest baby for my approbation, and made me welcome. I had difficulty in getting any food, a cheery "Haven't any," meeting my every suggestion. Eventually, however, I managed to obtain some lumps of grisly, unappetizing mutton, too tough to

On a sledge track across the dreary Siberian steppes

eat; a plate of rancid brined cabbage, and some excellent brown bread and tea.

To Beriorzvor we started early next morning. It was a cold run over a very bad trail. You would scarcely credit how bad that trail was for the major part of its thirty miles. There are plenty of holes that run to three and four feet in depth, dropping sheer, like our municipal gas and water trenches at home. Now and then you come into a sort of snow model of a rough day off the coast of Maine — east-west waves and north-south waves raging one with another in a veritable welter of hummocks and hollows and crumbling crests. As we came in sight of one of these appalling storm-spots, the loutish youth who drove turned round with a delighted grin, and immediately proceeded to lash his horses into a frenzy.

With a crash that flung both of us and my suit case a couple of feet into the air, we would land at the foot of a steep ditch. On dashed the horses, while the cosmos seemed riven with thunderbolt and earthquake. Now the suit case was leaping at me, now it sprang into the lap of the driver. Now it was the driver who went sprawling on his back; now it was I — but generally it was both of us.

Arrived at length at Beriorzvor, the food problem again came to the fore. It was no use exhibiting money. The log hut was a double-storied structure with four rooms, the most imposing residence, if one of the dirtiest, in the village, which was of some size. Yet I was simply met with a shrug of the shoulders and a "Haven't any," when I named any simple foodstuff. I managed to get three eggs, but they were proffered raw, and on asking that they might be boiled, the good woman brought me a cup of warm water and appeared to think that the situation was then relieved. But fortunately black bread and a few

thumb-marked scraps of frozen butter made their appearance.

The whole family trooped in and watched my every mouthful with the frank interest one exhibits at a freak show. The grandmother of this household was very strict with her commissariat. She kept all food and best clothes — everything bundled up together, a plate of butter and a paper of sugar wedged in between a couple of crumpled blouses and even more intimate garments — in a big iron-bound chest, gaudily decorated with colored stencils of tin. When she had deposited the remains of my meal in the chest, she locked it with an immense key; locked away this key, in turn, in a smaller chest; locked the smaller chest and deposited the key in her pocket. It altogether took away any after slurs that I might have been inclined to cast on the scant meal. I felt that great honor had been done me by my having been presented with the freedom of these carefully hoarded contents of the treasure-chest.

It was a cold run to Tarasova. How monotonous these assertions sound to you — and how inadequate to me! During the first ten minutes of each stage, just warmed by a seat near a glowing cottage stove and bountiful libations from a steaming *samovar,* I enjoyed to the full the exhilarating dash of the fresh horses, the snow spray that flew from their heels, the bouncing about in the hay, the checkered flicker of the pale sun as we flashed by the trackside birches, the shouts of the driver, the snatching up of a long-thonged whip and the lashing out at the fierce, gaunt, wolfish dogs that rushed from every yard and chased us out of sight of the village.

Then the cold began to strike through a six inch layer of warm garments. To get to me it had to penetrate a couple of fur rugs, some inches of hay, a borrowed sheepskin greatcoat, a fur coat, a wool-lined shooting jacket, a

warm tweed coat and vest, a woolen shirt and thick camel-wool underwear. But it did it, and came to stay. After the first third of a thirty-mile stage, I might have been clad in silken pajamas for all the warmth I could muster. Moisture gathered on my glasses and instantly froze, putting their utility out of action. It was not so much the actual thermometer reading that made matters so bad, but rather the keen, strong wind that drove incessantly across the shelterless steppes.

We passed one little birch copse on this stage. A pair of bullfinches were hopping and twittering among the twigs. It was a very welcome break in the monotony.

At Tarasova, late in the afternoon, I was driven to the hut of Bobareekin and received by a young girl who was spinning flax, and her small brother, with the tails of his shirt fluttering free around him. He was a solemn, fair-haired little fellow, who curled himself up on an upper bed shelf, affectionately nursing a chicken. He was delighted with a distorting mirror I gave him. While he played with it, his sister went for his mother, and his mother sent out for female neighbors. The mirror was passed from hand to hand amid shrieks of laughter. Then it was taken down the street to be exhibited elsewhere. It made a great hit in that pathetically toyless region.

The Bobareekins felt that something must be done to mark the occasion, so they brought in a great stone jar of delicious wild strawberry jam, which with new black bread and tea made a very welcome change in the Spartan simplicity of the dietary of these parts. Then I started off on the stage to Brookhanovor.

I shall never forget the desolation of that run. We passed no trees, no bushes, not a rock nor a knee-tall weed to recall a bygone summer. North, south, east and west, not a dark speck was to be seen this side of the horizon.

Mile after mile after mile of smooth, trackless snow. The old man drove standing, now and again crying out an encouragement to his horses. I felt the cold more than ever, and lapsing into a half-frozen lethargy, neglected to draw my head tortoisewise into my upturned astrachan collar. Presently the old man found me out, and stopped the horses. I could not catch the drift of his angry exclamation, but he told me in dumb show to rub my nose and ears. He stood over me till they were glowing and I had wrapped myself up properly again. Then he rearranged our furs, and off we went.

A snowbound Siberian village, in the full light of day, looks about as desolate and uninviting a human haunt as one can well imagine, but entering at night, after a long day's sledging against the wind, its cheeriness is overwhelming. Every little window blazed out its warm welcome, rays of orange penciling the dim, pale blue of the twilight snow. Here and there I caught the glint of a brass *samovar* on a table, a knot of people sitting around it. Cascades of sparks poured from chimneys. Men's voices rose to accompany the brayings and bleatings of an accordion. Cheerful haunts of men, like riches, are purely relative, and I found Brookhanovor a very pleasant spot that night.

We stopped at a two-story log cottage, and here I put up. Supper was a banquet; soup, potatoes and meat — scarcely edible meat — bread and milk. There was no guest room here, and I went to bed with the rest of the family, men, women and children.

Going to bed in a Siberian peasant's hut is quite a simple matter. You take a blanket or two, cocoon yourself in them, lie down on the floor and go to sleep there and then. There are no bedrooms, no beds. You do not disrobe. Men, women and children, cats and dogs, chick-

ens, ducks and turkeys, lie down side by side. The last person to turn in stacks pine logs into the stove, to its fullest capacity. Then he extinguishes the lamp, and another day is over. Sometimes there will be a bench, a pair of chests, a niche in the wall, or something like that, which is utilized as a couch; and sometimes the grandfather or grandmother of the household exercises the prerogative of sleeping on the flat, whitewashed top of the brick stove, hazardous proceeding as that may seem. But in the great majority of cases, you all, with a fine democracy, share the floor.

I found that the thin blanket with which I was provided did not do much toward softening the hard brick floor, and noticing a pile of hay in the corner, a couple of ducks resting on it, I asked if I might take some to make myself a couch. The family put the matter up for debate. There was a noisy discussion. The ducks woke up, snuggled more comfortably into the hay, and surveyed me with frigid, unblinking hostility. For a while, one of the women seemed to take my part, but eventually she capitulated and a unanimous decision was given against me. The ducks tucked their heads under their wings and waddled off to the land of Nod, while I had to resign myself to the bricks.

When I set eyes on the twelve-year-old who came round to the door with the sledge next morning, to drive me the final stage of my journey to the "*Konski Zabot Savlovski,*" I guessed there would be developments if we had anything like a bad trail ahead of us. And sure enough, before we had gone a couple of *versts,* there was trouble.

Navigating a Siberian cross-country sledge has several points in common with the navigation of a sailing dingy. In both of them you have constantly to be on the watch for a bad heel over to leeward, when a capsize can be

avoided only by a sudden flinging of one's weight against the opposite gunwale. And the sledge driver of tender years, like the young yachtsman, has an unholy tendency toward tying the sheet and letting her rip. Until one is an adept, it is rather a nuisance to manipulate the outrigger horse's rein in addition to those of the leader; and you tie it. Things go very well on a clear trail, but a sudden swerve on the part of the leader, to avoid a wayside stump or a passing sledge he fears to shave, brings swift disaster.

That is how it came about that, our outrigger slipping and forming the central pivot of a pair of compasses, the leader dashed round, weaving about him a cocoon of tangled and snapped harness, the sledge — upside down — trundling on until we managed to crawl out of the medley of hay and rugs and baggage, brushed the snow from our necks and eyes and arose to deal with the situation. Appropriately enough, our upset took place just outside the lonely little hillside graveyard of Brookhanovor.

At length we skirted a fringe of pine woods, the first foliaged wood I had yet encountered on the journey. As we pulled slowly up the hill, it was delightful to hear the soft rising and falling cadence of the wind as it soughed gently through the swaying branches. Then out we drew again, into the teeth of a keen, cutting blast that filled the air with whirling snow.

We passed a great church bell of brass picked out with silver, being hauled south on a sledge, from the faraway Trans-Siberian Railroad to the village of Manetza, a day or two's journey yet into the foothills of the Altai.

Now we were coming to the fringe of the great steppe, and the mountains began to close in around us. In place of the dreary, featureless seas of snow that had stretched to the horizon, rose tier after tier of pine-clad hills, not

rugged and abrupt, but slowly and surely rising, ridge by ridge, from the hobbledehoydom of ungainly, overgrown hills to the serene, majestic contours of mountainhood. Through a tiny village, over a frozen creek and up into a thicket of swamp willows we wound this way and that, until at last no glimpse of steppe remained in view, and we had penetrated far into a tangle of narrow combes among the mountains of Salaiyeer.

Our valley narrowed, and the forest swallowed up the undergrowth of the swamp and began to press closely in upon the track. There was no longer room for the outrigger; at every other step he was plunging kneedeep in the soft snow or crashing through the bushes. We called a halt, and harnessed him ahead of the leader.

For nearly an hour we passed along this narrow track through the forest. Animal footprints were everywhere on the snow — ermine, hare, wolf, with now and then a line of big pads that one might be excused for attributing to bear; as a matter of fact, the tracks of a wolf pack. Siberian wolves run always in single file, in spite of the scattered mobs beloved of picture-book illustrators, and though each beast paces in the pads made by those ahead, the passing of a pack naturally tends to enlarge the marks.

At length we came out on the rim of a deep, treeless bowl in the hills. There, on the far side, lay a group of dark-gabled, snow-covered roofs, the *"Konski Zabol Savlovski."*

I presented my letters, and Tombeark, trainer in chief of the Savlovski trotting horses, made his appearance and gave me a cordial welcome. A few years ago, he had passed three years on a big stud farm in the States, at Lexington, Ky., so he spoke very fair English. He could also chat to you in French, Polish, Armenian, Greek and sundry Tartar dialects of the curious Mongol tribes, the

Tunghizes, the Kirghizes, the Booriats, and the rest, which drift hither and thither over the steppes and forests of Siberia.

After lunch, we went down to the pacing track, at the flank of which is a ditch swamp of willow bushes. We hunted hares. Once disturbed by the dogs, they run in a two mile circle. They start up and rush away from a certain thicket. You light a cigarette, move a few feet away and keep still; and ten minutes later, the little beasts again make their appearance. No matter how many dogs are on their track, they keep their circular course as surely as do the trotting horses on the race track near by; they never break straight away across country.

I was introduced to the dogs. Most of them were named after "ze nation of sports," as Trainer Tombeark courteously, if ambiguously, termed us. Don, the well-behaved Irish setter; Daisy, the cowering little fox-terrier with her duck-chasing instincts perpetually warring with her fear of the vengeful open hand; and Lady, with a most unladylike zest for chivying young fillies.

Over a tea of rusks and honey, at which the superintendent of the estate joined us, I was eagerly asked for tidings of civilization. What were Edison's latest doings? What had he invented now? Do women really dare to trust themselves in aeroplanes? And, above all, how were the Canadians taking their recent annexation? (This was shortly after the threatened annexation scare engineered by Champ Clark, and the prevalent belief in the countryside around, said Tombeark, was that America had filched Canada.)

Tombeark fell to discussing the American girl. I asked him how, as a Russian, he had been struck by the dusky negroid belles of Kentucky. He did not approve of the looks of the white damosels of America, but he

The Savalovski stud farm in the Salaiyeers

A simple windlass is erected over the gold mine shaft

added flatteringly that there were some "not bad-looking fillies" among the lady negroes. He spoke highly of the northern beauties of Liverpool, which he visited on his way back to Russia from Lexington.

"Plenty good woman for wife zere," he concluded, pensively shaking his head.

As we sat over our cigarettes, I gave Tombeark one of those india-rubber toy beetles with inflated bodies, explaining its utility for backing up an indignant claim for a second glass of beer, without an additional payment.

He passed it on to the superintendent, translating in Russian.

"Don't you want it?" I asked.

"Ah, verra good for womens," he replied, with the air of one who is making a sacrifice in a noble cause, adding that the superintendent had a wife at home and would duly terrify her with his new acquisition.

We met again at dinner that evening. The end of the table looked like a well stocked bar; it carried nine bottles of mixed spirits and wines. After three or four preliminary glasses of *vodka,* we attacked a dish of lobster.

"His back tail is best," shrewdly observed Tombeark. We passed on to rounds of Moscow sausage and tongue, boiled very tender, and fried potatoes. There was a pause. Then the young cook appeared in the doorway, and with nervously clasped hands, gave rein to a tale of woe. Tombeark translated. The girl, it appeared, was a new cook; her predecessor had departed only a few days before, and this was the first occasion of her skill being put to test. We ought to have had mashed potatoes with our tongue, and the fried potatoes with the dish of *pirou-shkies* to come. So nervous had she been at the preparation of her first repast, that this grave error had been made. However, she was absolved, and departed to pre-

pare the rest of the meal which, by the way, did not seem to suffer by her agitation.

Now and again Tombeark's English failed him, and he leaned upon cosmopolitan gatherings from the tongues of France and Germany and his own land. As witness:

"He give not sick *tête*" (applied to our second bottle of Madeira); "Take you not *citronen avec votre chai?*"; and "Strawberry garden he live *im Wald hier*" (that is to say: "Some of our wild strawberries that one can find in the woods hereabouts are as big as the cultivated garden varieties.")

I awoke to find a beautiful morning. The wind had died down for a while, and the thermometer showed only sixteen degrees of frost. Tombeark gave me a huge coat of half-inch felt, with a big hood, and pulling it on over my furs, I entered the sledge with him and drove off for the village of Salaiyeer.

The first few miles lay through the agricultural lands of the 12,000-acre Savlovski farm, most of it being given up to the raising of oats for the horses.

We saw many hare tracks, especially along by the trail, for the little beasts come up to feed on the wisps of hay and grains of corn that drop from passing sledges. There were plenty of blackcock about, and we noticed a flight or two of bullfinches and an occasional fox track. Not a single log hut was in sight all the way to Salaiyeer, a distance of over seventeen miles. Twice, in passing laden strings of sledges, we drove a trifle too far out, and had our horses plunging up to the withers in the soft, deep snow, which necessitated a general turn out and an unharnessing.

A few *versts* before Salaiyeer the pines gave place to cedar, which gave the landscape a much bleaker aspect. A bitter wind sprang up from the southwest, whirling snow on its wings. In a few moments our fingers, feet

and legs were throbbing with the pain of the cold in spite of our heavy clothing.

We passed a bank of excavated gravel at the foot of a frozen glen. Tombeark pointed it out as a placer gold working. The driver lashed up the horses, and rounding a bare hill with not a tree to break its softened contours, we swept into sight of Salaiyeer, a mere cluster of dark triangular gables hinting at the presence of human habitation among the irregular mounds of snow.

Salaiyeer is built on the exposed flank of a small mountain overhanging a gorge through which a keen wind is eternally sweeping up from the Altai; the village is situated in a sort of gigantic draught. In summer, when the neighboring valleys are parched with fierce heat, Salaiyeer is delightfully cool. But in winter! Tombeark said it is one of the very coldest villages in southern Siberia; I saw no reason to doubt it. The cold is not a matter of temperature pure and simple, of thermometer readings. The wind is the culprit.

It is practically always snowing there, from late September to mid-May. The snow accumulates to an extraordinary depth: some of the village streets are entirely snowed in, level and higher than the roofs of the log houses. Every street is a succession of steep little snow hills. Coming in from the wild country-side, up the streets of Salaiyeer reminds one of a splashful spurt through the big surf breakers entailed in making a landing on an ocean beach. Half the houses were snowed clean up to the eaves. An unobstructed front door was a rarity. Generally doors and yard gates were to be approached only through deep, clean-cut clefts in the packed snow, with the surface towering over your head.

We put up at a substantial, two story cottage that is utilized by visitors from the Savlovski estate. With its

starting-place on the roof over the room in which I slept, boys had made a long and leisurely toboggan slide to the far side of the street. At another upper window, it was rather disconcerting to come face to face with cows and pigs, wandering unconcernedly in the upper ether.

A meal was prepared and we sat down to a *samovar,* libations of *vodka,* frozen white bread with a woolly taste, and a metal bowl containing lumps of tough ham.

The two intercommunicating rooms of the cottage were cheerfully furnished with bright and clean fittings. The walls were whitewashed and many large pots of flowering shrubs in bud, castor oil plants and geraniums gave a pleasant contrast to the desolation outside the double window panes. There were two ways of getting upstairs. You could come up the ladder from the stable, to a little landing, and then enter the dining-room through swing doors, or you could come up from the kitchen, through a trapdoor which brought you out directly under the massive table, all among the legs and feet of whoever happened to be sitting there. About half-a-dozen of us, from a white haired old man to a little boy of nine, sat down to lunch. At the conclusion of a meal in Siberia, it is customary for the hostess, without leaving her seat, to rinse the tea glasses with a jet of warm water from the *samovar,* and dry them with a cloth. Misunderstanding my request for more tea, one of the girls set about washing my glass, till Tombeark came to my rescue. Then he passed his own glass to be refilled, adding with a laugh that he had told her not to make any mistake over it, for Siberians hold to an omen predicting grim poverty for the man who asks for more tea after his glass has once been cleansed.

After lunch, I put a new spool of films in my kodak. The peasants were immensely interested in the operation.

That my vest pocket camera was genuine and could take real pictures, the grandfather flatly refused to believe. I made the little boy a gift of a box of those irritating "safety matches" sold by the toyshops, matches with the heads merely dipped in dark brown paint. Tombeark explained the significance of "safety" and there was much merriment. Presently little Nikoli was sent across the street to humbug an irascible neighbor, but the attempt failed, for the neighbor merely surmised that the matches were damp and bundled Master Nikoli off the premises.

The sledge was now made ready, and we drove round to the big bungalow of the local superintendent of mines. On the way we passed a metal statue of Tsar Alexander II, the liberator of the serfs, erected in 1894 by the grateful peasants of the village.

The superintendent, a short, bearded man in the dark blue uniform of the Russian mining engineer, received us cordially and chatted for some time on the mineralogy of the neighborhood. Then he said he was ready to take me down to the placer gold mines.

We entered our sledges and bowled off down the hillside for a couple of *versts*. Here, in a dried-up creek bed, lay the placer mines where pay dirt was being excavated.

The scene was not spectacular. You saw a few mounds of gravel, a ramshackle, open-fronted, little hut, and three small holes in the snow, edged with planks — at home you would have taken it for a desultory repairing of drains.

The shafts were forty, thirty-eight and thirty-five feet deep. A windlass straddled the top of each. The openings were less than five feet square, and you could see that the interiors of the shafts were stoutly timbered. From the foot of each shaft branched out a short tunnel; from here the pay dirt was coming. Twenty men were at work, and about eleven sledge loads of dirt were being

excavated a day. Each load was at once taken off to the washing creek at Gavrielovsk, where the interesting part of the work took place.

All of the mines of Salaiyeer are *cabinetski* — the personal property of the Tsar, *ex officio,* a part of the Tsar's great Altai estates. As such, the mines are leased out to companies and private individuals, ten per cent. of the total output being liable to sequestration for the Tsar's private purse. Human nature being notoriously frail and the Tsar being too busy nowadays to come around in person for his dues, the full ten per cent. is not often taken. Officially, the *cabinetski* superintendent of mines is empowered to take only five per cent., or even three per cent., should the mining operations be "experimental." Hence the size of your tax depends in large measure on your success in persuading the *cabinetski* superintendent that your efforts are merely "experimental." You find, as a bad man at Irkutsk told us, that you can afford quite a lot of "experimental" plant and methods on a really rich holding, if keeping a few industrious men to play with those weird machines lifts a five per cent. tax on gross earnings from your annual budget.

The Salaiyeer workings are much exhausted and produce only about fifteen *pud* a year now; a *pud* is thirty-two pounds. Some of the rich Lena workings in the north produce about 600 *pud* a year. All gold mined hereabouts has to go to the *cabinetski* assay laboratory at Barnaoul, the headquarters of the Altai estates. The gold comes in hither from the company tenants of the Tsar. The concessionaire company does not itself mine the precious metal: it could not find any peasants, however poorly educated and poverty-stricken, who would enter its services. The peasants will not work for a master. They would deem it merely the thin end of the wedge toward

the return of serfdom. So the company goes to the peasant miners and offers to buy all the gold they can procure in its workings. The only restriction is that the company's official shall oversee the actual shaft sinking and shoring-up — for the men are notoriously slovenly in their excavating and lax in the taking of proper precautions against a cave-in — and that it shall have a man on the spot at the washing sluices, to see that none of the workers steals a nugget. The peasants are all independent. They choose their own foreman, and each day's finds are divided among themselves in equal shares. The man who has been leading the laden sledge of dirt from the shafts to the creek takes as much as the man who has found a valuable nugget.

Every ten pounds or so of gold dust in winter, and, of course, bigger quantities in summer, when operations are less restricted by the intense cold, take the long, bleak journey across the wilds to Barnaoul. The gold is packed in stout wooden boxes and handed over to the postmaster. It travels democratically with any other parcels that happen to be going its way, and it has no special guard. There are only the driver of the sledge and the usual pair of armed mail guards. The Siberian mail sledge travels day and night, stopping only for change of horses every thirty or forty miles. It would be the simplest thing in the world for two or three armed men to lay a night ambush, kill the unsuspecting guards and go off with gold to the value of thousands of dollars. Yet I was assured that such an ungentlemanly thing had never entered the heads of the Siberians. The superintendent of mines of Salaiyeer had never heard of a case. Mr. Speight of Tomsk told us that he had made many long and lonely journeys with heavy gold consignments and had never had any apprehension of trouble. And this, mind you, in a land

where there are no police courts, only a few dummy policemen, a murder a day in several towns and the memorial crosses of murdered wayfarers popping up by the roadside with menacing monotony. The ruffians of Siberia are great sticklers for etiquette.

The only gold trouble in Salaiyeer occurred at the close of the Russo-Japanese war. A tattered band of a score of soldiers, penniless, their boots gaping at the toes, cast off without pay by their humane commanding officer, straggled into the village one morning. They went to the house of the superintendent of mines, with a request for a little money with which to keep themselves alive. They had heard that there was a big gold consignment up there at the moment. At first, assistance was refused them, and the poor fellows very naturally took the refusal to heart. They made a fuss.

These soldiers had fought through a dangerous campaign, at a wage that a New York office-boy would refuse. They had, time and again, jeopardized their lives for their Tsar; and he, in the person of his delegate, their officer, had embezzled their pay and turned them adrift into the Siberian winter. Behind the frail plank walls of that bungalow were sacks of gold, gold that belonged to the Tsar and was destined, perhaps, to be poured into the lap of a frivolous little Moscow ballet girl — for the Russian Imperial Ballet is maintained out of the Tsar's *cabinet's* percentages.

However, the superintendent had the good sense to send out 100 *roubles* to them, and the menace blew over.

We were back in the village before four o'clock, and there was nothing to do until next day. I read and reread all the correspondence in my pockets; and then, to my delight, I found a tiny thumbnail edition of "A Midsummer-Night's Dream" in the lining of my shooting

Gold washing on the Zeya River. A large number of Siberia's streams produce this metal

jacket. Tombeark had never seen so small a book before — it measured about an inch and a half square — and he eagerly dipped into it. The family wanted some of it translated, and he hit upon, of all passages,

"*Hermia:* O cross. Too high to be enthralled too low.
Lysander: Or else misgraffed in respect of years."

Tombeark had a stout heart and quite a fair knowledge of English of a kind, but he quailed at trying to get the gist of these sentiments. The work of converting the peasants of Salaiyeer to an appreciation of "A Midsummer-Night's Dream" is awaiting some braver pioneer.

Presently came supper-time, and Tombeark predicted that we should have cutlets. Vain hope! They turned out to be the usual greasy, tough meat-balls so beloved of the Siberians. However, he had routed out a bottle of passable Crimean claret, and the black bread was wholesome, so we might have fared worse.

After taking neat claret, Tombeark and the patriarch of the family took claret in their tea. By and by there arose an excited dialogue between them. The silver-haired man shook off his years and grew as vivacious as his grandson. They were talking, said Tombeark, of the real benefit of Tsar Alexander II's charter of liberty to "ze sklaves," the fiftieth anniversary of which had just been celebrated. The patriarch had been in Salaiyeer when the charter was issued and recollected the wild rejoicings with which it had been greeted. There had been much cruelty on the part of the masters, he said, much unjust treatment and brutal floggings. A serf then, now he held 200 acres of good farm land.

Then Tombeark fell to talking of New York. He had been twice to Brooklyn, and he had no desire to go there again. He spoke with glee of going out to bathe in the

ocean, and of the delights of Coney Island. He had enjoyed the "elevated," but had been more struck with the racing expresses of the subway, down in the bowels of the earth. That had been "ver' goot, ver' goot."

The old man told us more of Salaiyeer. Forty years ago, at the time of the great gold boom, it had been a flourishing town with many thousand settlers. Even a few years ago there had been 3,000 settlers. With the incursion of all these men, big shops were established. That accounted for our wine. Cases of fine wine are still maturing, unsalable, in the cellars of what have now dwindled to the usual squalid little Siberian village stores. In those days, miners often made forty or fifty *roubles* a day — $20 or $25 — and drank most of it away in *vodka* at night. To-day the village numbers only some 600 men, most of whom are miners. The glamor of the gold mine is alike the world over. Salaiyeer prefers to hang on at its washing sluices, hoping against hope, half-starving and in rags and tatters, rather than make the regular and comfortable wage of a small farmer.

Chapter V

PAYING CALLS

WE awoke at six. The room was pleasantly warm and the sun streamed through the double windows, throwing pretty checkered patterns across the home-woven carpet. Smilax trailed up the white-washed plank walls; with the pale oak furniture upholstered in orange, the *tout ensemble* was very pleasing and very un-Siberian. But outside the wind howled around the gables and one heard the sparrows scuttling for sheltered corners.

As I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, entered the huge bulk of Tombeark, asking for my passport. A day or two ago, he explained, the chief of police of Salaiyeer, running short of hay, had sent over three empty sledges to the Savlovski farm, with a request that a load be furnished for each. He had said nothing to the drivers about payment. It was a bold bluff at official intimidation — but the sledges were sent empty away, their driver entrusted with messages that needed considerable Bowdlerization before delivery.

Now the chief had heard of my foreign invasion and wished to convince himself of its perfect propriety. It was a delicate situation for Tombeark. He was ordered to bring round the passport in person. On his return, he entertained me with a vivid word picture of the great man leaning back in his chair, grasping the passport firmly in both hands and intently studying its every feature. He

had studied it for ten minutes though he knew not a word of English. Then, with evident chagrin that he had not a set of big, dignified visé stamps like those of the police of Tcheliabinsk and Tomsk, he dipped his pen in ink and proceeded to append a codicil stating that on March 28 this man had turned up in Salaiyeer, and that owing to an unfortunate lack of evidence that might warrant his detention as a criminal, he had been permitted to make his stay and depart unmolested.

"So far, so good," I replied. "Now what is the program for to-day? We are going to see the gold-washing, aren't we?"

"Ah! There ees too mooch wind," protested Tombeark. He went on to explain how cold and unpleasant a day it would be. Why not lounge about the house, postponing the expedition until the morrow?

"I'm sorry about the weather," I answered; "but I shall have to go all the same." I had nothing to read, and the prospect of an utterly uneventful day had no charms for me.

"Eet ees holy day," he added with a laugh. "Men no work." It had been a holy day yesterday, yet had we found sundry sinners at work at the excavating shafts, so I decided to risk finding a similar degree of heathen degradation down at the washing sluices. I said that we would go, holy or unholy day.

After breakfast, our old peasant host showed me an odd print, yellow with age, a wood engraving of a seaport scene dated in the seventeen seventies or eighties. Unfortunately I have lost my note of its engraver. Sixty years ago, before the serfs had been freed, explained our host, that print had hung, framed, upon the wall. It had been brought from western Russia by his parents. Shortly afterwards an Englishman, passing through Sala-

The *samovar* occupies a prominent place in the Siberian hut

iyeer, had happened to put up at this little house. He was very struck with the print, and had offered fifty *roubles* for it. The old man, a mere youth then, had his full share of peasant shrewdness, and refused to part with it.

Now Salaiyeer is well off the beaten track of Siberia even to-day: sixty years ago, with no railroad nearer than Germany, isolated in the center of thousands of miles of wolf-ravaged forest, it must have been one of the last spots in the world to expect an English traveler. So far as I am aware, there are no records extant of Englishmen penetrating to this sequestered part of Asia in the Victorian fifties. Who could the mysterious print collector have been?

Another interesting wayfarer had perched for a night or two in this little whitewashed room, on his flight through the wilds to more happy climes. At the close of the Russo-Japanese war, a young Russian officer had ridden on horseback all the way from Vladivostok, on the Pacific, to Petersburg. It took him nearly two years. On his safe arrival, he had sent our host his photograph, a handsome, bemedaled Cossack, who smiled down from a plush frame on the wall.

Downstairs I noticed a sewing machine of a famous American make. It is extraordinary the way this enterprising firm in question has exploited its machine in Siberia. There is scarcely a log cottage in the whole of northern Asia, be it ever so many days' lonely sledge journey from a town or railroad, which has not one of them.

We bade farewell to our host, and set out in a brisk snowstorm to Gavrielovsk. Here we called on the *cabinetski* mines overseer for the district. He was out, but his wife, a handsome though rather untidy lady in a lace negligee, gave us a warm welcome. She sent her pretty little girl, who was dressed in a long Holland smock, to

get me some *kvas,* a drink made from fermented mare's milk, that is in great demand throughout the Russias. It is like flat and slightly sour cider, and assuages thirst; but it is scarcely a beverage that you would go out of your way to imbibe on its own merits.

Mrs. Nankin told a curious tale about her house, a commodious one story log bungalow. It was a death house for pets. No animal or bird could be kept there. Poultry and ducks never lived more than three weeks or so, and every one of the many dogs and cats she had tried to keep had gone mad within a few weeks. At that very moment, a lady who had been a member of the household, was at Tomsk undergoing the Pasteur treatment for mad dog bite. Her husband was inclined to attribute the trouble to the proximity of a long-disused silver smelting works a few yards away. He thought that the poison of the silver tainted the water. Yet no human being had experienced ill effects on that account.

Our hostess told us, too, of a fox-terrier in the house, which had brought up a bereaved kitten along with its puppies. She spoke of the terrible howling of the wolves at dusk, along the edge of the pine woods that skirted the hill behind the bungalow. I asked Tombeark to enquire whether they were to be heard at this season of the year.

"No; in ze fall," he replied. "Now zey are married."

Mrs. Nankin asked us to come back to supper, at the end of the afternoon, and she saw us off to examine the gold sluices, a quarter of a mile down the creek. Here there were thirteen washing sluices, though as it was winter, only three were working. All operations were in active progress.

First the newly arrived sledgeload of pay dirt from the Salaiyeer shafts is emptied into clay pockets, such as

bricklayers use for mixing their lime. Then water is poured in and a man chops up the mess with a hoe, into the consistency of thick soup. Every now and then, he ladles some out on to the five-foot by three-foot plate of iron, sieved with rows of small holes, that is laid on the plank bed of the sluice in a narrow channel of the creek. Two men with hoes then beat it about, crushing every lump of undissolved gravel. When all has been "washed" or dissolved in the current of running water that careers down the sluice, the water is dammed, and the iron sieve plate lifted, displaying to view a few handfuls of blackish sand that has sunk through the perforations during the washing. It is among this sand that the tiny specks of precious metal lurk.

A man squats at the foot of the sluice, a little hoe-end in one hand, a stiff scrubbing brush in the other. Deftly he disturbs the sediment, to which a small quantity of quicksilver has been added, disturbs it in long semi-circular sweeps that draw away the pebbles and the coarser sand, leaving at last a child's handful of dark sand. This is taken up on a tiny iron shovel the size of your thumb. Glancing keenly into it, you spy, among the quicksilver, a few specks of very minute, glittering brassy stuff — the gold.

It was fascinating to stand watching the whole process, from the unloading of the sledge to the appearance of the "find"— less bulk of gold than a pin's head. It is rather disillusioning. Most of us get into the habit of picturing gold-mining as a trade of strutting about in a romantic red shirt, now and again striking the ground with a pick and nonchalantly taking up the nugget as big as a walnut that, of course, is exposed to view.

What do you think these Salaiyeer gold miners earn during the winter months? They work like horses from

dawn to dusk, and the division of the gold pans out at twenty *kopecks* or ten cents a day! Things are certainly a little better in the summer, and a few years ago the men were making five and seven *roubles* — $2.50 or $3.50 — a day. They exist on past memories, and no one knows what may come up, one fine morning, from the foot of the shafts on the hill. Gold miners are very human.

Nuggets are rarely found on the Salaiyeer workings. When they do appear, they never run larger than a raspberry. A day or two before my visit, a nugget weighing half an ounce had been found, but it had contained a considerable amount of quartz alloy. I told the men of the finds at Klondike, the enormously rich pockets up the shores of Bonanza Creek. As Tombeark translated, their jaws dropped in amazement, and they ejaculated a chorus of admiring "Ahs." It takes a Siberian miner, slaving away in the icy water at eight cents a day, to appreciate the Bonanza properly. They asked if foreigners were allowed there and when I said "Yes," two or three dropped their shovels and for a moment I thought that the gold miners of Salaiyeer were going to ask me there and then to escort a personally conducted party up to Dawson City. However, I assured them that they would do better by staying at home, working up on their own rich Lena placers, or even persevering with their sluices here, with the ever-present possibility of five *roubles* a day, that would make them the envy of many a Klondike prospector.

When the little shovel containing the clot of gold-bearing quicksilver, the size of a quarter, was handed back to the sluice foreman, it was carefully taken down an inclined pathway through the snow into a dark underground hut roofed with turfs and snow. Here a man crouched over a pile of smoking embers, heating the shovel. In five minutes the quicksilver had been consumed, leaving only

a pinch of mealy, dull, crumbling gold. From an old lobster tin, the miner produced a small pair of brass scales and weights. With great care, he got the accurate weight, tilted the dust into a tiny envelope, penciled on the weight, and in the presence of the company's official, immediately dropped the envelope through the slot of a black can, the lid of which was heavily sealed.

There is always an inspector of the leasing company at the washing sluices, but his mission is rather a sinecure. The inspector cannot be at more than one sluice at a time, and the men have ample opportunity for pocketing all the nuggets they are lucky enough to find. Nuggets are forbidden to be sold at the mines but may be purchased of the *cabinetski* assay office at Barnaoul.

Returning to Mr. Nankin's bungalow, we were met by his private sledge, which he had courteously sent to carry us back. After chatting for a few minutes, we went in to partake of the dinner Mrs. Nankin had prepared.

There were *zakouskas* of three kinds of fish, pickled red cabbage, salted white cabbage and caviare. With the *zakouskas* or *hors d'œuvres* we tossed down about half-a-dozen nips of strawberry *vodka,* and a glass or two of a Crimean white wine. Macaroni soup, the inevitable Russian meat rissoles with mashed potatoes; pink blancmange, *kvas,* tea, more *vodka,* preserved raspberries, rolls of white sweet bread — *Fransooski khleb* — and Moscow sweetmeats in paper wrappings, followed.

Superintendent Nankin began to talk of mines. He spoke of coal and iron in huge quantities, whole mountains of it, and news of fresh deposits coming in every week. Like other men we met subsequently, he cried for railroads, railroads, railroads! What can you do with your mountains of coal and iron ore when you are many days' sledge journey from the Trans-Siberian, when every load

of iron ore or coal would take over a week to get to a distributing railroad? He asked why American and British capitalists, and the investors who argue over their three and four per cent., do not persuade the Tsar's ministry to let them open up Siberian railroads, railroads that shall be leased to them for fifty years and then bought in, as going concerns, by the Russian Government. There is no question of inadequate returns or of jeopardizing capital. There is no mystery about the great mineral deposits of southern Siberia. Foreign mining engineers are free to come and inspect to their heart's content, and even to superintend testing experiments in person, by the simple expedient of obtaining dummy claim-stakers or concessionaires of Russian nationality.

We took our departure at dusk. Once the village had been passed, the track was swallowed up by gloomy pine woods. It was a delightful and all too short six *verst* run to Goorievsk, now in the heart of the pine forest, now skirting a wide ridge. The snow was blue in the waning light of the dusk; a few yards away all objects faded off into vague, bizarre shapes looming through a bluish mist of dim, refracted light. But overhead the world was full of odd, drifting silhouettes, a riot of gnarled limbs and pine crests. Cutting through this wasp-waist of the great Goorievsk forest was not without its spice of adventure. The woods here are alive with wolves. No one will drive a string of ponies or a herd of cattle home from Goorievsk to Gavrielovsk after sunset, and there had been several cases that winter of wolf packs actually giving chase to belated sledges. On this account, while you do not have much difficulty in getting a driver to take you, in the evening, from Gavrielovsk to Goorievsk — which is downhill — you cannot get transported up the hill from Goorievsk to Gavrielovsk for love or money.

The Justice of the Peace, after a painting in the Tretiakoff gallery

All too soon we came to Goorievsk, a little town of 2,000 people, lying in a bowl of the hills, an important iron-smelting center, though painfully handicapped by the cost of transporting its heavy product through the long journey north to the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

The streets were in an awful condition, simply a chain of evil-smelling ponds and noisesome morasses. We put up at the *zemstkaia kvatura,* the public guest house of the place. A mob-capped, flat-hipped woman received us, arrayed after the slovenly manner of a backwoods farmer's good lady, but representing the height of fashion among the short-skirted, bare-footed, beshawled *moudjik* women. Both Tombeark and myself were consumed with an enviable thirst, after our long course of *vodkas* and salt fish at Gavrielovsk. She of the mob cap brought us heavy earthenware pitchers of cold, creamy milk, which one ladled out with a big polished oak spoon. We disposed of about a gallon, and then turned bedward.

We breakfasted next morning off a dish of buckwheat griddlecakes and melted butter, cheese and *petit beurre* biscuits, the best fare obtainable. Then we embarked once more and undertook the thirty-five *verst* drive back to the Savlovski farm. Tombeark explained that the Savlovski farm lands ran eight *versts* over hill and plain, to the south. Oats and hay were raised chiefly. Strawberries and cucumbers, he added in reply to my query, could be raised only in sheltered gardens; the hillsides were too bleak for them.

I passed the afternoon reading and napping: a long morning drive in the Siberian cold makes one sleepy for the rest of the day. At four o'clock, Tombeark joined me for rusks and honey and tea.

"The honey is produced on our own farm," he said. "At the height of the summer we have a hundred hives

in operation." A big tract of sheltered meadowland was sown entirely with honey-giving flowers. When the bee season came on, the old peasant who slept on guard in the hall, under the chipmunk's swing cage, acted as second-in-command. The chief bee expert was a younger man from a small village in the north. For six months a year he did nothing; the other half of the year he tended bees.

Presently we went through the paddocks and stables of the stud farm. The one-year-olds were very nervous, shaggy little beasts, but if one kept still for a few moments, there came a tiny prod, a touch, another touch, a moist, quivering nose over one's shoulder, another nose tapping the small of the back. They gathered round and nosed and sniffed and examined one to their heart's content. The superintendent joined us and pointed out the American and British strains in his charges, while his lovely golden setter, "Lady," played the most unladylike game of teasing the brood mares. She would mark an unsuspecting mare and creeping quietly up, spring into the air with a snap at her nervous victim's nose. Up the startled brood mare would fling her head, and Lady, as frightened as she, would slide cravenly away, quivering in every limb — only to recover her self-possession again and trot off to startle yet another victim.

At the supper-table that night, we fell to chatting of hunting. Tombeark asserted that Colonel Savlovski was the proud possessor of the second finest shotgun in the world — the reputed best belongs to the Tsar. This wonderful weapon is of English make, and passes most of its time in a safe deposit vault at Omsk.

Tombeark spoke in high terms of the dachshund as a sporting dog, which sounded odd to a citizen of a nation which reserves its dachshunds for decorous suburban walks with staid maiden ladies. Apparently we ought to regard

the dachshund with respect. He is a spirited little beast and much in demand with gunners in Russia and Siberia. He will readily keep to heel, resisting the temptation to dash about and lose his head when you come on a little flurry of game.

They use him in bear hunts, too. Does not the idea of a few couple of little dachshunds giving chase to a great Siberian bear sound pantomimic to American ears?

However, his bravery is proverbial. He shuts his eyes and hangs on to the great beast's jowl, as Rikki Tikki clung to Nag's whirling hood, never leaving go, flustering the bear until the huntsmen come up to administer the *coup de grace.*

Tombeark went on to tell of wolf hunting with the long, lithe *Borzoi.* Outside Russia, the *Borzoi* figures chiefly as an artistic adjunct to photographs of the Danish princesses; but east of the Urals he has to abandon musical comedy attitudes and face a dangerous and a strenuous life. Wolf hunting with *Borzois* is not so general in the Russian empire to-day as it used to be. It flourishes chiefly in the Orenburg province, in southwest Russia. The *Borzoi* has not the staying power of the British greyhound, but he is incomparable in a half mile spurt.

"We ride out in the morning," Tombeark told me, "half-a-dozen men with four couple of *Borzoi* on leash. Sighting a wolf colony among the rocks of a wooded hillside, at a distance of say 790 meters, we slip the leashes and spur forward our horses into a gallop. Then what do you think happens?

"The pack, which from the moment it had sighted us till the loosing of the hounds, had sat quietly on its haunches, awaiting developments, prepares for action. The moment the hounds are loosed, the young wolves of the pack turn tail and scamper off. Meanwhile, the older

wolves sit there unperturbed. When we have covered half the distance and are some 390 meters away, they too get up and glide off between the pines. Then two wolves only are left, the old father and mother, leaders of the pack.

"With the gleaming-fanged *Borzois* racing toward them at breakneck speed, Father and Mother Wolf do not turn a hair till the foremost hound is within a short hundred yards. Then Mother Wolf glides off to the left. Father Wolf stands his ground until the *Borzois* are almost upon him. Then he lopes off under their very noses, in the opposite direction to that taken by his wife. The result is, of course, that the hounds forget the pack, and follow Father Wolf. Separated by only a few feet, he leads them for a *verst* or two, far enough to have given the pack and Mother Wolf plenty of leeway in their flight. Then he stops playing and begins to run in real earnest, leaving the winded *Borzois* far behind.

"You may imagine how exasperating it is for us huntsmen. All we can do is to keep one couple on leash during the general rush, and to take them up the track of the young wolves when the other *Borzois* lose their heads. We may have to follow the young wolves for ten *versts*. They rarely hold out for longer. Then we find them sometimes lying exhausted in the snow, their heads buried in a scraped-out hollow, after the manner of the African ostrich. Of course, you will understand, there are times when the wolf pack loses its head. The flight does not always take place as Father and Mother Wolf desire; that is why we unleash most of our hounds as soon as we sight the pack."

"Is the wolf much to be feared?" I asked.

"Not in summer," said Tombeark. "But in the winter months, with an empty belly and food scarce, he is quite another beast, and you do well to keep out of his

way after the dusk begins to settle down. He is most dangerous in January.

"The wolf wanders singly or in pairs during the summer. Food is plentiful and his life is pleasant enough. Then comes the first pinch of winter, in late September, and game grows scarce. The young wolves begin to feel pangs of hunger, and drawn together by this common bond, they will sit along the outskirts of villages at dusk and howl their summons to all wolves within call. In this way packs form, not large packs nowadays.

"Ten years ago, packs hereabouts often numbered a hundred or more, but a dozen or fifteen is more usual to-day. Last week, by the way, a pack of ten visited a man's farmyard out Salaiyeer way, and killed six cows during the night."

After breakfast on the following morning, Tombeark made his appearance and asked me to come and inspect the bees' winter quarters. The old beekeeper, a shaggy-headed patriarch of eighty-four, led the way for a few hundred yards up the steep hillside behind the bungalow. The snow lay two feet deep; just a hardened crust no wider than a handbreadth constituted the path.

The bee farm was a warm, sunny little hollow of about two acres, at the top of the wood. In a couple of sheds were stacked the hives, honey boxes, and agricultural gear. Passing through a thick, felt-rimmed door, I found myself in a warm, dark retreat. There was a faint droning in the air. Around me were a hundred white wooden hives, each with its neatly stenciled number. On a post among the hives hung a holy ikon, a brass-shrined enamel of Saint Peter — even the bees were being brought up under the proper auspices of the Orthodox Greek Church.

At eleven o'clock, a sledge was brought round to the door, and when good-bys had been said, off I started on

the long return journey to the Trans-Siberian. I decided to make the trip in true Siberian style, one swift dash, sledging day and night through the snowclad wastes.

The first morning stage was exquisite. The horses were fresh and needed no inducement to proceed at wild gallop. The world around us was painted in just five colors: the deep blue sky, paling to sea-green on the southern horizon; the dazzling snow; the warm red of the pine trunks and their olive foliage. At the end of a Siberian winter, pines are withered to a much lighter shade than in more clement climes.

Once out on the steppe beyond the forested hills, we ran into a keen, steady wind that seemed to strip the garments off one's back. At two o'clock we reached a village, and I chartered new horses. The next village was reached at the end of the afternoon. Here there was a delay in changing horses, and it was not until after ten o'clock that we came to Beriorzvor. Both the driver and myself were very cold and could scarcely unclench our cramped fists to pick up the glasses of steaming tea that were given us. On our arrival, the whole family was abed, curled up under dirty blankets on the floors of the three intercommunicating rooms. However, the chance of seeing a real live foreigner from a faraway land was too good to miss; and, one by one, sleepy men and women and children yawned themselves in, and sat ranged along the two forms against the opposite wall, watching me intently. There were seven of them, and four small children.

Then there was trouble about continuing the journey. Would not the morning do? they asked. I told them that it most decidedly would not, and that I must have horses "*Seychas! Seychas!*" They talked things over, and presently the grandfather of the household made a

The typical Siberian hut is heavily stockaded

An interior view showing the ikon corner

long and mumbling speech to me, riddled with allusions to the *varrk,* the dreaded Siberian wolf. From the trend of his remarks I gathered that the wolves were making themselves objectionable on the Popayretchnaia trail just then, and that a night journey was not relished. However, I pulled up my snow boots, fur coat and gauntlets, and gathered my belongings together. They saw that I was in earnest; a woman beckoned me to be seated for a few minutes, and sent a boy out into the night. Then an icy draught swept in and the doorway was blocked by a big man with a stock-whip, who made a courtly bow to the *gaspadine,* took his baggage, and out we went.

A rough cross-country sledge journey by night, across one of the worst trails in southern Siberia, spells a good many things having to be seen to. The cold is more intense, of course, and you must have three or four fur rugs or sheepskin coats to throw over your knees, as you squat in the nest of hay. You have to go over the crude, patched-up harness piece by piece, to see that the whole will stand the strain of a frantic bolt, should a wolf pack be encountered. And the traces of the outrigger horse have to be tautened up with especial care, for they have a knack of slackening and fouling the heels of the other horse.

Three of the peasants stood by us with swing lamps, as preparations were completed, and the rest of the family clustered around the open door of the cottage. When everything was ready, we were tucked in, and the driver laid a big nickel-plated revolver and a thick shillelagh of a stick across his lap. A man smote the outrigger, and away we slid into the blue night.

The wind had dropped for a while, and the going was very pleasant. All the stars of the zodiac seemed to have clustered just over our heads, and a curious moon —

"The Old Moon in the New Moon's Arms"— drooped over the eastern sky. It was a new moon, a mere crescent, but a thin silver rim curved from tip to tip of the horns, and the whole disc shone faintly luminous against the enveloping darkness.

But the lull was too good to last. Before many *versts,* we encountered once more the keen blast of the steppes, whirling up the powdery snow as a summer windstorm picks up the dust.

How the driver and his horses ever managed to keep to the track was a mystery. For a whole hour at a time, we dashed over an absolutely featureless expanse of swelling steppe, a treeless sea of snow, no visible track before or behind us. The driver grew sleepy soon after midnight and began to yawn. He crooned a low, mournful dirge, as he crouched among the hay and furs, a befitting accompaniment to the cold and darkness and desolation.

Presently the track passed through a strip of pine forest. The driver became more alert: he ceased droning his song and leaned forward, staring intently ahead.

Suddenly, with a jerk, the horses stopped dead and bucked back on their haunches. Snatching up his club, the driver sprang to his feet. I pulled my automatic from its holster and scrambled free of the rugs — just in time to catch a glimpse of a wolf slinking off between the trees.

We had some difficulty in starting the horses ahead. With heaving flanks and quivering nostrils they stood there, rooted firmly in their tracks, oblivious of kicks that would have got an elephant under way. However, we tried a shot in the air. It had the desired effect.

There was no more crooning of little songs, and no more dozing. I think we were both somewhat relieved when that forest began to fade on the horizon in our rear,

and the plains opened out again, cold, bleak and utterly deserted though they were.

We banged up the Bobareekin household at about half-past three in the morning, and by four the huts of Popay-retchnaia were left behind us on the last lap of the journey. To do justice to the cold of that last stage, in the wee sma' hours, would need more resources than are available in the English tongue. It was agonizing, and I had had no exercise to stir my circulation since ten o'clock the previous morning. But it had to come to an end.

As the pink dawn flushed over the eastern hills, we came in sight of the great girder bridge that carries the Trans-Siberian railroad over the Tom, and at six o'clock we arrived at Tootalskaia.

It had been good going. According to Tombeark, the Colonel has a reputation for fast sledge dashes, and actually made the journey from Salaiyeer to Tootalskaia, on one occasion, in twenty-two hours. I had taken just nineteen.

Chapter VI

IRKUTSK, THE UNREGENERATE

WHAT San Francisco was in '49 when it flourished as the gilded Gomorrah of the West, Irkutsk, the largest town of Siberia and metropolis of the Asiatic goldfields, is to-day — with additional trimmings.

Residence in Irkutsk is not altogether a rest cure for the nerves. With a population of close on to 113,000, crammed into a couple of square miles on a picturesque bend of the river Angarar, it produces some hundreds of murders and murderous assaults in the course of a year, with a few dozen arrests and fewer convictions, with sentences of a short residence in jail. That was the situation a couple of years ago, and with a throb of civic pride, the natives told us 1910 was quite an off year.

"In the spring, a young man's fancy (in Irkutsk) fondly turns to thoughts of blood." One fine day in May, a year or two back, there were twenty-two assorted murders and attempted murders within a short distance of the city. These included a disastrous picnic on an island in the lower Angarar, to which an enterprising Irkutskian invited a dozen persons he disliked. He saw that they were all busy unpacking lunch and then put off in the boat and managed to shoot down half a dozen before one of the guests hit him.

Then the street cleaners and insurance agents voiced a protest, and there was talk of reviving the old Vigilance

Committee that citizens used to frame up among themselves after the manner of 'Frisco once on a day.

The Vigilance Committee that held sway in Irkutsk was not altogether a success. The scheme, projected by a handful of law-abiding citizens, was enthusiastically received — by ex-convicts and delegates of professional murderers. They rolled up in their dozens and scores and volunteered for service. The governor granted them exceptional powers, and they made the best of them. While such police as there were were bribed into passivity, wealthy merchants were shot down in broad daylight as "suspects"; and under the cover of "house-raiding" and "punitory confiscation," burglary put out blossoms and flourished like a green bay tree. That is why the Vigilance Committee idea is no longer as popular in Irkutsk as it might be. Still, though Vigilance Committees are banished to the limbo of the past, the police and Cossacks keep life lively.

A few years ago, all the gold mined in Eastern Siberia had to pass through the government laboratory at Irkutsk. As a matter of fact, quite a lot of it did — about forty per cent. The other sixty per cent. went to the city's Chinese "dealers in tea," and journeyed back to the Celestial Empire in many and devious ways, a good proportion packed in the corpses of coffined Chinamen who were being returned to the east for burial among their ancestors.

Well, in spite of that leakage, a good deal of gold dust found its way into the laboratory, and having been cast into ingots, was stacked up in tempting array, to await transportation to Russia and the imperial mint. After several night watchmen at the institution had met with accidents, the authorities began to perceive the coincidence, and appointed a force of Cossacks to come in each evening and stand guard over the treasure.

All went well for a time. Then, one dark and stormy night, the Cossack guard brewed itself a glass of hot *chai,* lit its cigarette, turned up its overcoat collar, and completely disappeared with every single ingot of gold on the premises. Since then, Cossacks, as civil authority, have shared Irkutsk's feeling toward Vigilance Committees.

There are other aspects of the preservation of law and order in Irkutsk, of which Scotland Yard would not altogether approve. For the last eighteen months, the city has had a rudimentary street lighting system, but the residential thoroughfares, a stone's-throw from the main shopping streets, are left in pitchy darkness. Naturally they form the burglar's Happy Hunting Ground. Not infrequently, as you pass down one of these streets late at night, you will be startled by an explosion over your head and the whistle of birdshot past your ears. For the timid householders, without the slightest objection being raised by the police, fire a shotgun from the bedroom window before turning in for the night, just to show the possible lurking burglars that there is a gun in the house.

The city's policing is done partly by municipal, partly by private patrolmen, the latter subsidized by property owners. The private constables deserve an honored niche in the gallery of Twentieth Century philosophers. The Irkutsk night patrolman, with the high-souled purpose of warning prospective burglars of his approach and causing them to abstain from sinning, makes the night hideous by perpetually clattering a powerful wooden rattle. He grasps it firmly in his hand, and from dusk to dawn parades the streets, whirring it round and round at every few paces.

The method of assault practiced by the Siberian outlaw is "garroting." He approaches his victim from behind

and throws over his head a loop attached to a stick. One quick jerk, and the unfortunate wayfarer is hurled backward, gasping for breath, or dead — his neck broken. There are few holdups in Siberia without murder; murder gives a nice touch of finality to the deed. One is disposed to ask if the natives do not protest against their streets being littered up in this manner; what a householder does when he goes out to sweep the pavement of mornings and finds a stray corpse lying on his doorstep. Innately religious, the Siberian gives Christian burial to those he finds garroted to death. He even erects a cross over the grave, a cross inscribed with the petition asking whosoever passes by that spot to pray for the soul of him who died. Siberia is filled with these crosses. One encounters them everywhere, in the fields, along country roads, and on the mountain sides.

Of the tens of thousands of convicts in Siberia, a large proportion make their way into Irkutsk at the expiration of their sentences, anxious to snatch a few weeks' enjoyment of the sights and sounds of this crude, overgrown mining camp before making plans for the future.

Every Russian subject, of course, equally with the foreigner, must hold a passport. At the end of their term, the dangerous criminals get "black passports," which generally prevent their being able to find honest employment. They have to live, so they are beggars by day, thieves and cut-throats by night. They keep on good terms with the police and any detachment of troops that might happen to be detailed, at the moment, for patrol work on the streets, and do not find it difficult to bribe them to abstain from interference.

From the lawless side of poverty-stricken, wealth-cursed Irkutsk to the gayety of the gilded hotels and dance-halls is not so far a cry as you might suppose. For, unsus-

pected by the casual visitor to the big towns of Siberia, the obsequious waiters, who bustle to and fro to fulfill one's every wish, often enough are murderers who have served their time and decided to settle down in the east. The tall, portly head waiter with the restless eye and the big, bifurcated Slavonic beard, who must be recollected by those travelers who have visited Tomsk, slew his wife and her lover, and has served a long term of imprisonment in an *oblast* of the frozen north.

Of the Irkutsk hotels, the two chief have murderers on their waiting staffs. The other waiters are said to welcome them — they have a healthy influence on nervous guests whose tips might be larger.

Irkutsk is pretty gay at nights now, but the citizens look back enviously to the zenith of its career, to the days of the war with Japan. Then champagne and other costly wines were cautiously transported, free of duty and freight charges, from Petersburg and Moscow, in those gray steel cars labeled "Powder," cars militant with painted imperial two-headed eagles, a lurid picture of a bursting shell, and military guards, which you pass now and again on the railroad. At Irkutsk, the "powder" cars were shunted off along the barracks' sidings and found a final house of refuge at the end of the rails entering the store shed of the officers' mess, in the barracks west of the big red-girder bridge across the Irkut. A colonel of a locally stationed line regiment openly boasted in the hotel restaurant, one night, that more champagne was consumed in Irkutsk in one month during the Japanese war than is sold on Broadway — that backbone of the champagne industry — in half a year.

The fun at Irkutsk starts at midnight. An hour before, the city is as dead as a New England Sunday.

The Bolshskaia, Irkutsk's principal street, is broad and flanked with substantial buildings

Then the theaters and the moving picture shows close down, and everyone crowds into the restaurants.

You enter a pair of swing doors, kick off your felt snow boots, hand your furs to an attendant and pass on into a long room thronged with diners, gay with the uniforms of the garrison and women in smart Parisian costumes. At the far end is a small stage on which a score of maidens in a minimum of skirt and a maximum of smile go through fatuous double-shuffles and fancy dances executed with a degree of incompetency that would leave a Bowery "amateur night" audience dumb with scorn.

An act over, the dancers skip down to mingle with the crowd, scattering around the tables and ordering the costliest fruits and the rarest wines that the management can provide. There are songs, curious yelping conceits by untrained feminine voices; and sleek, swarthy Poles sing their national comic songs, with snatches of patter and pathetic attempts at a "cellar flap" which help to capture the guests' straying attention for a few moments. Till dawn there are gay music and crude vaudeville, crude, but going with a genuine verve and spirit of unforced fun that is lacked by many a better show — fine fare for the groups of self-condemned exiles, the mining agents and engineers, officers of the garrison, fur traders, merchants, concessionaires and miners, snatching a brief holiday in town from the desolation of the Siberian wilds.

There are not many evening distractions in Irkutsk. If you have not a thorough understanding of the tongue, Russian realistic drama at the opera house on the Bolshskaia, or Main Street, is apt to pall. Then you are reduced to the moving picture shows.

The chief moving picture show of Siberia's capital gives a weekly engagement to some seductive human draw, a

blessed oasis appearing in the desert once an hour from six till midnight. There was the ossified man — an American from Maine — who was wheeled round on a barrow every afternoon from his comfortable quarters at the hotel, surrounded by an admiring and loudly speculative gang of small boys.

And the Hinglishman from Hupper Clapton, who professionally added to the gayety of nations by dying, *coram populo,* thirty-six times a week. At least, he held a certificate from a professor at the University of St. Petersburg, stating that he could stop his heart beating for twenty-eight minutes at a stretch, though in Irkutsk he did not make a practice of repeating the full rigor of that feat, for even the satisfying spectacle of a dead Cockney begins to bore a Siberian audience after the first ten minutes.

When the management launched a Prussian with performing cats and a lisp, we forswore the glittering allurement of that hall of pleasure and took to sitting late over our liqueurs, in the hotel restaurant, studying the phases of the Russian officer in his cups.

There were they who, being too far gone to see the lamps through the narrow bore of the straws accompanying their cocktails, seized each successive bunch brought by a trembling waiter and rending them in twain, cast them upon the floor until the immediate vicinity would have furnished the Israelites of old with sufficient brickmaking apparatus to rebuild a substantial section of the Philæ. There were the fat little doctor of the 27th regiment, who would ever and anon wobble unsteadily over to the orchestra and get the pretty girl with the rose in her hair to let him bang the drum at noisy crescendos in the marches; and the major who drank two bottles of maraschino, and then watered the fern on his table with half a pint of

kummel, rather than leave what he could not manage to the waiters; and others who did not behave so well.

On the second day of our sojourn at the hotel, a Danish acquaintance asked if we knew that the manager was telling everyone that Wright (Richardson L.) was Wright (Orville), the brother of Wilbur. The news of this illustrious arrival was spreading about the metropolis of Siberia, and already the hotel had corralled, on the strength of it, numbers of the regular patrons of rival establishments. We asked our informant to pass the word along to the reporters of the *Siberski,* the chief Irkutsk daily newspaper, and to translate a most illuminating interview we subsequently drew up, giving sensational details of a large aeronautic campaign that brother Wilbur was about to launch in Irkutsk. But being a resident of the city, he deemed it advisable to study his future bodily safety, so he reluctantly declined.

We arrived in Irkutsk on the sixth of April, one of those abnormally warm days that come to us, at home, in early March, a balmy day flooded with sunshine and full of the joyous promise of spring. And the first Siberian spring day, the first day you can take a walk without your furs, can unscrew the double windows that have been sealed hermetically for more than half a year, is something you can never forget.

The snow is thawing fast and brooks of water ripple down the gutters. There is a new, light-hearted atmosphere about the streets. Everyone is smiling and gay, and merry chatter is bandied to and fro among the passersby. Front doors are thrown open, and women and children sit on the step. Chairs and tables are brought out into the courtyards. Corner liquor shops leave their doors open, and stores let down sun-awnings of spruce striped canvas. Girls in fur toques hurry along the side-

walks, each carrying a large paper bag bulging obviously with that fine new spring hat.

The market is thronged with housewives of every social status, baskets on arms, anxious to mark the advent of spring by bringing home some special delicacy. Hundreds of peasants have come in from the country, laden with produce. They squat in long double rows, shoulder to shoulder, among their bales and baskets. Some are crouching in a group of turkeys, free or tethered, which peck at handfuls of grain that have been powdered into a tuft of hay to prevent too rapid consumption. There are great crates of dead moorcock and quail, and live capercailzies in netting-roofed wicker cages; live fowls and pigeons and tame white rabbits. Kegs of salted cabbage and cucumber, bowls of cream and stone pitchers of milk; vegetables of a score of tints and kinds. Tiny calves have been roaming about with the big scavenger dogs of the market, and lie, stretched out on their sides, basking with them in the sun. Along by the river, men are busy with upturned boats, caulking seams and painting gunwales. And the summery smell of hot tar comes fragrantly down the breeze.

The Angarar is one of the first rivers in Siberia to rid itself of ice in the spring. Rising in Baikal, it scurries past Irkutsk at six miles an hour, green, glass-clear water through which one can distinguish every fish and bottom pebble twenty feet beneath a boat keel. Standing on the high bank, with our binoculars, we could clearly see the snow-clad peaks of the mountains the other side of Baikal, over forty miles to the east.

We remained in Irkutsk two weeks, and spring was with us most of the time. There were days when we loafed in the little park on the Angarar bank beneath the shadow of the colossal statue of Alexander III. The

monument, standing at the foot of the Bolshskaia, looks not back along the railroad that this empire-dreamer conceived and built, but eastward to Amurland and Manchuria. The Irkutskians are proud of their statue, and rightly so. Were it not for Alexander III their town would still be the straggling trade post it was three decades ago. Moreover, the statue is a genuine work of art.

On one side of the Bolshskaia opposite the statue stands the museum where is housed a remarkable collection of ethnological curios. On the other side of the street is the residence of the governor-general.

Across the river from Irkutsk, on the south side of the Angarar, is a little summer resort, Glascow. In the warm weather the Irkutskians of money move over there and keep cool in their bungalows up among the birch groves. At night time a brass band blares out crude music for their delectation.

If you walk over the hills behind Glascow you eventually come to a stockade that at first glance spells the sinister word prison. But if you can creep near enough without the guard noticing you, the idea is dispelled by a glimpse through the cracks of the fence. Within this enclosure is stored the equipment of an army — lines of mountain guns and gun carriages, heaps of pontoons and wheels, and rows and rows of ambulances, many of them battle-scarred. This is the magazine of the Irkutsk district. From the hill where it stands you can look across Irkutsk and the Angarar to the heights north of the city where the Government is erecting an immense barracks.

We walked up that way one afternoon. Leaving the hotel, we passed under the east arch whose inscription told us "This is the way to the great ocean," followed the Amurskaia, a stretch of the original road along which all traffic and convicts passed before the railroad came,

sauntered through the Viana Goroduk, the Cossack city, skirted an old serf graveyard, and came out on a plateau above the city. There, in the center of it, stood the barracks, a six-story affair, grim, imposing, the home of 10,000 troops. The Government is still adding to it. The stores warehouses are springing up on all sides. And the barracks chapel is almost swallowed up in this new military town that is growing around it.

On our way back, our Danish guide stopped a soldier and asked the direction. He was a sullen, cow-faced peasant with a bayoneted gun and a sabre — the ordinary private. He pointed the way, and the Dane turned to us and spoke in English. Before we could answer, the soldier broke into a string of Bowery welcomes that, despite their crudity, almost made one feel homesick. He asked, in the blandishing parlance of George M. Cohan, how "Little Old New York" was, and if "The Broad White Way" was still as giddy as ever. He had gone to America, he explained, before he had served his time in the army. Then a touch of homesickness had called him back to his folks in Poland. He went, but before he had been home twenty-four hours, the local captain of gendarmes had recognized him and had placed him under arrest. So he was obliged to join a regiment and was sent to serve his time in a Siberian garrison. He had one more year, and then he was going back to America.

"He evidently does not like the country," we observed when he had gotten out of earshot.

"That's not to be wondered at," Shonebeck replied, "He was a Jew, and Jews do not have much chance in the army. They cannot rise above the rank of captain."

And thus we fell to talking about the Jew in Siberia.

In Russia the Jew is herded into a corner — fifteen provinces being allotted him — and not allowed to leave

without permission, or unless he is a professional man or a skilled artisan. There he is subjected to occasional *pogroms,* raids by orthodox Christians who have no other way of venting their spleen on him than by pillage and murder. In Siberia, however, he has far more freedom. The natives tell you that the Jew is the curse of Siberia, but that is only because he is more cute and more persevering than the Russian in business.

Irkutsk, Shonebeck informed us, is owned by rich Jews. And we found them up to their old tricks. Half the houses in town are placed in the names of women. The Russian is not apt to have his Hebrew creditor pounce upon his home in payment for debts.

Money, since the war, has been tight in Siberia; that is, money in large sums. In Irkutsk, twenty per cent. interest is demanded, though the government rate is five per cent. Rents are high. The cost of living is not excessive if one is contented not to live high. The hotels have a moderate tariff: our bill for the two of us for a fortnight was only about $90.

There are thirty Greek churches in the city, two synagogues, one Roman Catholic and one Lutheran church. The cathedral, the seat of the Archbishop of Irkutsk, stands on the square in the center of town, an imposing edifice with blue and gold domes and outside murals under the eaves. The Irkutskians tell many spicy bits of gossip about its erection, not the least interesting of which is that of the contractor who made $50,000 graft from the building fund.

With its $160,000 theater on the Bolshskaia, its white-walled, soldier-guarded jail, its four breweries, its museum, its orphan home, its military and civil hospitals, its department store that has, by the way, a large electric sign, the only one in all Siberia, its single rubble-paved

main street, and its murder record, Irkutsk is making a fair bid for reputation among the cities of the world. Yet there are incongruities that bring a smile to the face of the foreigner. The fire department, for example, and the Irkutskians will have you know that theirs is the best in the length and breadth of Siberia.

Fighting fires in the hithermost realm of the Tsar is done in a peculiar manner. First you find the fire. The city is plotted into districts, each with its engine house and watch tower. On the watch tower, by day and by night, stands a guard who scans the housetops for a sign of smoke. When the fire has gotten well enough under way for him to see the smoke, he gives the alarm and the engines dash out. One is amused not so much at the dash, as at the engines. They are primitive and the use of them is more so. We went to a fire one Sunday afternoon in Irkutsk. It was close by our hotel, so that we were afforded an excellent view of the arrival of the engines. First came a *troika* team dragging a hook and ladder carriage. On it clung the firemen — howling Cossacks with brass helmets jammed down over their ears, and carrying in one hand — how the symbolism would have stirred the heart of Maeterlinck! — flaming torches. Behind the hook and ladder was the hose cart, and then came a hand engine of the type our grandfathers dragged to fires. After that, for two blocks, trailed a queue of water-filled hogsheads on wheels. The cavalcade passed us in a cloud of dust and accompanied by the yells of the torch-bearing firemen. When the supply of water ran out, the carts dashed down to the river and replenished the supply. This rather crude high-pressure service gave rise once to a not unhumorous incident that the Irkutskians tell with great glee. During a fire several years ago, a string of water wagons had gone down to the river, had gotten the

The waterfront of Irkutsk. The city is on the banks of the Angarar and Irkut Rivers

fresh supply and rumbled back. When they reached the fire, the water was gone. The enthusiastic captain of hogsheads had neglected to put back the plugs in his barrels and had spilled his supply for two blocks along the Bolshskaia.

On the flats to the westward of Irkutsk, across the Angarar, stands the monastery of St. Innocent, walled in and remote, a veritable mine of piety and legend. Here is preserved the body of St. Innocent, an early missionary to Siberia. Contemning the honor as abbot of the famous Troitsa monastery near Moscow, this good man came to the Siberian wilds to minister to the faithful there and to carry the Church teaching to the scattered tribes. After a life of holy labor he died, and his body was buried here in the monastery. That was 200 years ago. The priests in charge say that the body is as fresh to-day as when first put there. The devout natives believe this and come in throngs to worship at the shrine and to kiss the cross above the tomb.

At Irkutsk, by the way, we fell among Danes, the men in charge of the outposts of the foreign service of the Great Northern Telegraph Company.

To a man, they spoke English perfectly, and they were acquainted with the idiom and slang of several English and Scottish dialects. Along with the patois lyrics of France and Germany, they were quite at home with Chevalier's most colloquial costerisms. They had read most American and British authors and they subscribed to English weeklies along with the products of the Danish, Russian, German and French press. A rather striking example of the difference in results between our own and the Danish method of picking up foreign tongues.

The Great Northern Telegraph Company had practically the monopoly of all telegraphic communications

between London and Scandinavia, Scandinavia and northern Russia, St. Petersburg and Irkutsk — on through trans-continental messages — and Siberia to Pekin. There is an office in Petersburg, another in Irkutsk, another at Kiahkta, on the fringe of the Gobi Desert, and a big terminal in Pekin.

One night we visited the Irkutsk office. The G. N. T. occupies quarters in the main Russian government telegraph office of the city. Passing down a long corridor, flanked by intercommunicating halls full of men and girls and clicking instruments, we entered a spacious, comfortably furnished room, fitted up like the president's sanctum of a big commercial house.

"There are the two Pekin machines," said Shonebeck, pointing to a pair of spick-and-span varnished boxes, picked out with brass and enveloped in mysterious wheels and pointers and strips of paper and coils of insulated wire.

"Are they direct?"

"Oh, yes. Like to see the route?"

We walked over to a wall map and traced the long line across Asia, past Baikal to Verknie Oudinsk, down past Kiahkta and on and on, through Urga, and over the cool, moonlit wastes of a thousand miles of the great Gobi Desert of Northern China to Pekin. A long, long stretch.

We returned to the table. Christensen gave a few staccato taps. Instantly straggled down the revolving paper tape, an inky zigzag. Inside five seconds we had spoken to Pekin and had a reply!

"Ask 'em about the weather down there?" echoed Christensen. "Can't chat over much. . . . There is only a Chinese attendant looking after the wire at the moment. I know a Dane in the office, though. I'll see if he's about."

His fingers twitched. Back snapped the reply in Pidgin English:

"Mr. T. no comee here. Comee office 1.30 tomollow."

While Pade got up an exhilarating rat hunt for Jack in a wastepaper basket full of wreathed tape, Johansen and Shonebeck waved us the latest *Illustrated London News* that lay on the couch. A long message in cipher had come through from the Chinese Government in Pekin. It had to be relayed on its way to the Celestial Empire's ambassador at Rome. The Chinese Government always uses number cipher in communicating with its ministers, and all its telegraphic communications with Europe pass through the instruments on the table in this room.

On the other side of the table were the Petersburg instruments. We hazarded the guess that there were a good many breakdowns on those wires which pass across Asia and eastern Russia alongside the railroad track. In many places, the poles — uncharred and uncreosoted — tilt over at sharp angles. Many poles are idiotically planted, though this is the fault of the Russian authorities who control the poles and the maintenance of both their own and the G. N. T's wires, in actual pools and water-filled swamps, with the result that they have rotted through to the thickness of a baseball bat at the height of a few inches above mud or water.

However, we were told that breakdowns on the long Petersburg wires are of rare occurrence, yet these direct lines, through which a touch of the finger can flash an instantaneous signal to the Russian capital, stretch over a vast expanse of wild steppe and forest that can be covered only in eight days and nights by the express trains.

"The Gobi lines suffer more," they told us. "Sandstorms are often very bad down there, and poles are uprooted."

A bell tinkled. Johansen rose and went to the table. For a while he was busy with the clicking instruments. Then he rejoined us.

"Have you a match?" he asked, sinking into an armchair. "That was Rome: not very chatty to-night, praise be! Chinese ambassador sending back his reply to that query from Pekin."

Now since that query had come in to our room from the Gobi Desert, sped across Siberia and half of Europe, down to Rome, gone to the Chinese ambassador, been examined and replied to, we had smoked a cigarette and a half. And yet one prattles of Chinese procrastination!

"What did you do here during the big telegraph strike of the revolution of 1905?" we asked.

"Oh, ran on as usual."

"But we understood that the whole telegraph service of Siberia was paralyzed, that the revolutionists shot every man who stuck to his post."

"Yes, it wasn't altogether healthy from an actuary's point of view, to disregard the trend of events. Each mail brought us anonymous letters, threatening a good variety of uncomfortable and minutely specified deaths should we stick to our posts. However, we threw them in the wastepaper basket and sailed merrily on — and there the matter ended so far as we were concerned."

This handful of light-hearted, free-and-easy young Danish gentlemen in voluntary banishment the other side of Siberia, is constantly doing some good turn or other to stray Americans and Britons. Last year, to record one instance of many, an officer of the British army was taken seriously ill with fever aboard an eastbound Siberian train. He was put off at Irkutsk. In his delirium, he refused all medicine, crying out that the Russians were trying to poison him. He could speak no Russian, and

his doctors could speak no English. The Danes heard of the case. They had their work to do, but one or other of them made a point of always being on watch by his bedside until his death. They arranged for and attended the funeral and burial in the little Lutheran plot of the graveyard of Irkutsk. Then they put in order his posthumous affairs, got into communication with his widow, and sent her all his papers and effects.

Chapter VII

SETTLING SIBERIA

WE were walking one day with some of our Datski friends past the freight yard of the Irkutsk station, which is across the river from the city. Just as we left the pontoon bridge that the Irkutskians throw over the Angarar when all the Baikal ice has gone down, we found our way blocked by a long draft of freight cars being shunted off to a siding.

"There are some new Siberians," observed Shonebeck. "Do you see the stencil on the side of the car —'Twenty-six men or six horses'?"

Squaring the station guard at the gate of the freight yard with some small change, we sauntered along the tracks by the train that was now pouring forth its occupants. In that long line of box cars you could read the story of Russia's settling of Siberia.

On the immigrant train you see what purports to be civilized humanity at its lowest level. You may not quail at the housing and surroundings of the black races, but you will be unprepared for this degree of degradation among whites.

The first car behind the engine had a sinister aspect. Its windows were heavily barred and a Cossack with a bayoneted rifle stood on the platform at each end. There were hands held out to us from the windows of that car, hands that did not reach far because they were manacled. And the faces behind them — some were young and hope-

ful, some were hard and dead. It was an *arrestante wagon.*

One cannot travel a day on the railroads of the Kingdom of the Little Father without encountering these prisons on wheels. Sometimes they form entire trains. This is not to be wondered at since thousands of prisoners are shifted about each day. According to conservative official data, those in transportation in all parts of the empire on one day, February 1, 1909, numbered 30,000.

Before the coming of the railroad the exiles to Siberia were obliged to tramp the entire distance. They and their women folk toiled wearily along the post road. The journey from Tcheliabinsk to Irkutsk and beyond Baikal took, in those days, all of two years. Now it is only a matter of a week or so before they reach their destination.

It was not pleasant to linger beside the *arrestante.* Moreover, the guards were growing uneasy at our presence.

On this immigrant train there were cars for families and cars for single men. The former were simply stables on wheels. In them, three human generations — grandparents, the man and his wife in their prime, the children — and the population of their little farmyard back in Russia. Three cows and half-a-dozen sheep lie in straw and knee-deep filth, munching hay and green stuff. Bales of hay and straw are stacked to the roof, the home of the wandering fowls and turkeys and ducks. A couple of big lean dogs crouch in a corner.

A Russian log hut has not much furniture. All there is fits comfortably into a box car, even when cows and sheep, backed by a small haystack, swell the family circle. Goods and chattels are disposed here and there, chairs are placed around the rude table, a lamp and even a pair of religious prints hang on the wall. Baby is installed in her swinging cradle at the end of a spring. The peasant

cradle in Siberia is like a meat scales and bounces up and down.

The single men's quarters were populated by an intimidating band of ruffians, bare-headed, bare-footed, shaggy-bearded creatures with flat animal faces and wild, bloodshot eyes, one's conception of a shipwrecked crew after ten years on the desert island.

Toward the tail of the immigrant train was a coach of dazzling white — the hospital, a very necessary adjunct to a journey taken under the conditions and lasting from one to three weeks. Through the open door we caught a glimpse of a brass and white enameled bed, a spotless white counterpane across it, and surrounded by all the dainty fittings of a private room in a good metropolitan hospital. The uniformed nurse sat by the window embroidering.

The clean, white, little room; the bleeding, shaggy brutes among their cattle in the filth of the dark, miasmatic box cars next door!

The first people who went out to settle Siberia did not go of their own accord. They came from the town of Uglitch, and against them was the charge of having enraged the Tsar by testifying to the murder of Tsarevitch Dmitri. With them was exiled a bell that had persisted in ringing when the Tsar demanded silence. It was ordered to be flogged, its ears chipped off, and thus mutilated, it was banished to Tobolsk to "do time" with the talkative inhabitants of Uglitch. That was in 1593. There is significance in the incident because it is typical of one of the methods Russia has employed in settling her territory in Asia.

For three hundred years Siberia has been a great prison. For three hundred years it has been the darkest blot on the escutcheon of Christianity and civilization. Tales of Russia's exile system in the past are only too well known.

And though the revelations of Kennan, of Prince Kropotkin and of Leo Deutsch have done much to readjust the conditions in the jails and awake public sympathy, Siberia is still a great prison. Since 1900 the exiles to Siberia have been restricted to political offenders and those who dissent with violence from the Orthodox Faith. The remaining bulk of those in prisons east of the Urals are the local miscreants, the thieves, murderers, forgers, etc. Yet with this new ruling in force, the body of prisoners is very great.

Between 1823 and 1898, according to figures given in Wirt Gerrare's "Greater Russia," 700,000 exiles accompanied by 216,000 voluntary companions were sent into Siberia. In the same period 187,000 criminal convicts with 107,000 companions went out. Since that time, between 1898 and 1912, 157,000 were exiled to penal settlements in North Russia and Siberia. This, of course, includes the host of *politicals* banished for participating in the Revolution of 1905, though it does not include those who served their sentences in jails. The total number of exiles in 1909 to all parts of the kingdom amounted to 74,000. These are the figures of the Russian police. Ninety per cent. of this aggregate went to Siberia. Those in exile in Siberia at this writing number about 40,000. Four thousand were sent into banishment in 1911–12.

Alien supporters of the bureaucracy and those who see the country from the windows of the Trans-Siberian express will be apt to dispute these figures. The fact remains, however, that political exiles by the hundreds are to-day being shipped out to a living death. You cannot go down the rivers, the Irtish, the Angarar, the Yenisei, the Amur or the Lena, without seeing barges crowded with exiles *en route* to the prison settlements in the Tobolsk and Yâkutsk Governments on the verge of the Arctic circle.

Active colonization was begun in the Seventeenth Century. The first immigrants who were not exiles were Cossacks of the Don sent out to make settlements along the line of the pioneers. These Cossacks, the Government hoped, would serve a two-fold purpose — provide a military population and till the soil. Unfortunately, the Cossack is nomadic and, so long as he is soldiering, does not prove a good husbandman. On the other hand, when he settles down to plow and sow his fields and reap the crops, he ceases to be a soldier. As a colonizer, the Cossack did not fulfill all that was expected of him, but he accomplished a feat of more value. He carried the Russian eagle to the Pacific and established posts between the Urals and the "great ocean."

After the Cossack came those who had dissented from the Orthodox Faith, the *Raskolinks,* the Puritans and Quakers of Siberia to whom Russia offered no peaceful habitation. In those early days thousands of Jews, Finns and Poles poured into what is now the Government of Tobolsk. These together with the exiles populated Siberia.

Russia is offering, at present, great inducements to those of her peasants who will settle in Siberia. It costs nothing to emigrate thither though you do not journey as a convict. Upwards of some quarter of a million peasants come out every year, in consequence, an annual immigration bulking many times larger than that to Canada from England, yet passing unremarked by the rest of the world.

A Russian peasant to-day can receive free transportation for himself and family, his flocks and his herds and everything that he hath, from his native village to a settlement in faraway Siberia. And there he will be given land and loaned a grant for a year's farming expenses.

Settlers of Siberia. Immigrants waiting for a train at a wayside station of the Trans-Siberian

Each male is given forty and one-half acres, care being taken that the region to which he is sent compares favorably in general characteristics with the land he had known in Russia. No taxes are levied for the first three years, and only one-half of the taxes for the second three. Service in the army is not compulsory among immigrants until the end of the first three years, that is to say, until they have cleared their fields and built their houses. Moreover, the Government sees that there is to each family at least one man. Should the older son die while the younger is in the ranks, for example, the younger son is dismissed from active service and sent back to the farm. If the peasant is absolutely destitute, the Government will help in furnishing farm utensils, payment being set for a later date and on the instalment plan; will give him seed, and, should the first crop be poor, provide him with the cash equivalent. He is allowed as much timber as he needs for the construction of his house and barn. Moreover, in order that the new farmers may learn the methods of modern agricultural and dairy methods, the Government has set up dairy schools and agricultural instruction stations and offers series of prizes to be competed for.

Nearly the whole of the region in Southern and Central Siberia capable of sustaining settlements has been surveyed and plotted by the Government inspectors who assist the local authorities in the distribution of the land. There are some thirty distributing stations, the largest of which is at Tcheliabinsk.

Under this paternal system, the tide of immigration has been growing. Between 1870 and 1890 only half a million went out. Then came the railroad. Between 1893 and 1901, 1,318,000 went out. In 1908 the figures reached 758,000. There was then a falling off in the

number because the land had been visited with great droughts and poor crops had resulted. 1910 saw only 352,950, and 1911, 226,000.

Not all of the immigrants reach the station for which they set out. This is due either to the lack of personal funds or the temptation to squat in some section that pleases their fancy as they journey by. Thus 100,000 are registered each year at Tiumen, three-fifths of whom never get any farther than the Government of Tobolsk. The average peasant does not favor going east of Baikal though the Government is trying to direct immigration thither. According to officials, the arable zone along the railroad is crowded, and the central steppes, tilled as they are at present, visited with periodic droughts and famine, do not justify more settlers.

Of those who go out, a certain percentage returns, either unsatisfied with the section allotted them or else unable to cope with the exigencies of the climate and the roughness of the soil. Thus, of those who went out in 1911, 80,000 have returned.

Siberia's present population amounts to about 10,000,000, a large portion of which are convicts or exiles and their descendants; a dwindling portion the native tribes. There are about 90,000 Tartars in Western and Central Siberia. The Kirghis and the Cossacks and the Siberiaks, the last the descendants of the first settlers who married the natives, are occupied with most of the grazing. Large tracts of land for that purpose are granted them. The Tartars are Mohammedans; their mosques are to be found in every town of size in Western Siberia.

The Kirghis are the remnants of the old Turko-Mongolian hordes that at one time threatened to overrun Europe, but which, as the Cossacks came farther and farther into the new territory, receded and were beaten into sub-

jection. The present tribes live in *yurtas* or felt tents, and raise sheep, horses, camels, goats and cattle.

In the neighborhood of Lake Baikal one meets with the Booriats, and in the neighborhood of Barnaoul and Minusinsk, the Kalmucks. The Government is making great effort to induce these natives to settle down to farming. The establishment of a governmental instruction farm on the edge of the Gobi Desert has not as yet met with much success as these tribes are inherently nomadic and do not prove good husbandmen. According to the latest reports, the management of this farm is said to have been taken over by an American harvester manufacturing company, a concern which practically monopolizes the business of farm machinery in Siberia.

North of Baikal in the Government of Yakutsk are the Tunguses, the Ostiaks and the Samoiedes, all of them living by hunting and fishing much after the manner of the American Indian.

The Cossacks offer a different story than do these native tribes. From the very beginning the pet soldiers of the Tsar, these fearless troopers have been given more advantages than the ordinary settlers. In Central Siberia they are granted sixty acres of land per man, and in the Maritime Regions, 100 acres. In Western Siberia they form about ten per cent. of the population.

The Cossack government is a thing apart from the local administration of affairs. There is a *hetman* or chief and three under *hetmen* who form a Military Board and command all the Cossack troops in Siberia. The little Tsarevitch has been made Chief *Hetman* of all the Cossacks in the empire. There are three classes, those boys enrolled for three years' service at the age of eighteen; those who enroll at twenty-one to serve for twelve years; and the *reservists,* or those who have seen five years' active service.

There is much talk in Siberia of the disbanding of the Cossack army in order to encourage them to take up farming more seriously. From a picturesque point of view, at least, this will be a loss, for no body of men in the world ride with such reckless abandon or such endurance. The weekly drills of the Cossack force on the city square in Irkutsk are revelations to the foreigner.

Russia has been populating Siberia now for over 300 years, with results that do not compare favorably with the settling of other colonies; certainly her success is not relative to the opportunities the country offers. There are three reasons. The country itself is to blame. The winters are severe, with a temperature falling often to 50° below (Fah.) in many spots of the arable zone, and the summers extremely hot, sometimes the thermometer reading as high as 114° (Fah.) in the same district. There are next to no spring and autumn. Moreover, the people are lower in the scale of civilization than those who have settled in the western parts of America.

And the exile system, that scheme whereby Russia has tried to fill up her new land with bad men or with political offenders, and expects to get thereby a healthy, loyal, hard-working people, has much to do with the present state of affairs. The Siberians themselves realized this position. In 1898 they protested so violently against their country being a dumping ground for criminals, that two years later a law was passed abolishing banishment to Siberia for criminal offense. Those exiled now are only the political and religious offenders, so the officials assert. If this is true, then Siberia's list of murderers and thieves must rival Russia's crop of malcontents, for the jails are crowded, *arrestante wagons* are seen at all times on the railroads, and the prison barges are kept busy as soon as the rivers are free of ice.

A group of Mongols, showing their strangely fantastic headgear

Stories of prison abuse in Siberia are still related. Of course, the treatment of prisoners depends much on the personal equation of the warder and his assistants, so that abuse to a greater or less extent exists in every prison of the world. That men are flogged, that those condemned to death are abused and beaten before execution, that women *politicals* are outraged, that devastating contagious disease, torture, suicide and murder are rife in the prisons and exile settlements is as true to-day as when Kennan crossed Siberia.

The Russian Government, with tactful hospitality, has removed these eyesores from the view of the squeamish foreign traveler. There are *etapes,* or exchange stations in each city (these also serve as city and county jails) where prisoners are distributed and allotted their places of confinement. They are not conspicuous for the excellence of their sanitation.

Classification of prisoners is made only between the criminal and the political, so that the petty thief and the murderer rest side by side on the same sleeping bench. In transportation, however, there is no distinction. Thus a university professor and his pupils, exiled for their ideals, may have to travel for weeks with the forger and the thug; and young girls, hardly out of their 'teens, have to ride in the same *arrestante* with prostitutes and degenerates and are obliged not only to watch scenes too revolting even to think of, but, as is recorded in several authentic cases, they themselves to suffer pollution and disease. When they reach the place of final detention, the *politicals* are kept apart. Women *politicals,* by the way, average about one to every twenty men.

Each prison maintains a workshop, a crude infirmary and a domed, cross-topped chapel. One marks, not without the temptation to be cynical, that the shimmering

gilded cross of the Irkutsk prison chapel is on a line with the sentry boxes above the stockade where stand armed sentinels ever on the alert to shoot down their unfortunate fellow men, on the slightest provocation.

Since the war, when Japan was ceded the southern half of the Island of Saghalien, the northern parts of the Governments of Tobolsk and Yakutsk have been used as the spots for exile. In this region where the temperature hangs all winter at forty degrees below zero (Fah.), where, in summer, perpetual cold fogs enshroud the land, and in winter the air is dull with snowfall — snow as fine as salt — up there in little hamlets along the rivers, the *politicals* live out their sentences. Those with only short terms — four or five years — are given $6 a month by the Government for their support; the life termers, however, are not given one *kopeck*. Both classes are permitted to work if they are fortunate enough to be able to find it; but, as one who lived a time in an exile village describes the situation, " I have seen nothing but worn faces of men vainly going about in search of work."

The life termer, after having served ten years of his sentence, may come south from the exile settlement and live in a town. This liberty applies to all but capital cities. Those with short terms can go back to European Russia at the expiration of their sentences. In the past year many of those who were exiled for participation in the Revolution of 1905 finished their time and came back to their homes.

Despite an army of spies, of troops, and the rigid examination of passports at the frontiers, many *politicals,* as well as many convicts, escape. It is estimated that of the 157,000 *politicals* banished between 1898 and 1912, fully 40,000 have made their way to other countries. The usual procedure is to be furnished with a passport

and money by friends, and with this to cross the border. In this manner, Japan has come to have a large refugee colony, so large, in fact, and so conveniently near Russian territory that Russia has recently been trying to arrange for the extradition of political refugees from Japan. The effort has not succeeded and the consensus of opinion is that Japan will not agree to such a scheme. America at present harbors some 7,000 political refugees, about 1,000 of whom reside in New York City. It is interesting to note, apropos of this fact, that there are also in New York and many other American cities members of the *Okhrana,* or Russian political spies, who mark the movements of the refugees and report immediately for arrest such rash souls as are venturesome enough to return to Russia for further revolutionary activities.

The system of making Siberia a dump for the outcast and the outlaw has resulted in Siberia becoming one great happy hunting ground for the thief, the thug and the murderer. In one region, Trans-Baikalia, for example, fully 20,000 of the population are time-expired convicts. The Government, wishing to settle that region, is directing them to that quarter. As no one trusts them, they can get no honest labor, so they loaf by day and rob and kill by night. They usually wander about in bands, called *brodjagi,* terrorizing whole neighborhoods.

Several attempts have been made to corral these ex-convicts and ticket-of-leave men into restricted sections and to induce them to form little villages by themselves, but the plan thus far has not worked. In Siberia legendry there are tales of villages hidden away in the forests where bands of escaped *politicals* and criminals have established themselves, communities of God-fearing men and women. However pretty the legend, one is prone to doubt its reality as the native has little time for the escaped

criminal and will often shoot him on sight. In some districts in the neighborhood of jails, the authorities offer a bounty of a *rouble* a head for each escaped person shot. Thus travel in small boats on the rivers is often fraught with danger, for the farmer without discrimination shoots whomsoever he sees floating past his village. There was, until recently, a colony of escaped prisoners in North Manchuria at the junction of the Shilka and Argun rivers where the Amur is formed. It was called Jeltunga, and for years its 3,000 inhabitants lived in peace, scaring up a living by a little farming and some placer gold mining. The Russian authorities, after several attempts, finally succeeded in enticing the leaders of the community across the Amur and they were promptly arrested. The rest of the inhabitants were dispersed by the Chinese at the instigation of the Russians.

The general attitude of the Siberian toward the convict is that of charity. There are societies to investigate cases of prison abuse and organizations to provide food and little comforts to those confined in jails. So long as a prisoner is in chains under a heavy guard, the Siberian will speak of him as a "poor fellow" and throw him a handful of *kopecks,* but once he is out of custody, he is a "bad man" and in general odium.

The *politicals,* on the other hand, form a nucleus of the best people in Siberia. If they survive their sentences, they come to the towns and settle, opening shops, or studying, and entering into the commercial and social life. The other inhabitants are not inhospitable to them. Few of the intelligent upper middle class families in the Russian Empire are without one or two relatives whose views are reactionary and who have undergone imprisonment for them. For this reason, when they have finished their sentences they are treated kindly by the others. We found

Railway guards are a necessity along the Trans-Siberian

An *arrestante wagon,* used for transporting criminals

that a prison sentence among the better families is looked upon in much the same light as is an operation for appendicitis with us. The fallacy of exile system, of course, is that this scalpel of bureaucracy does not cure the trouble, for sentences in jail and years in the Arctic penal colonies do not break the spirit of the *political.* At the expiration of his time he is more rabid — and more subtle — a revolutionist than ever.

While traveling through Siberia one meets with many of these *politicals,* some of them hardly out of their 'teens. To pick three from a number in our journal:

Into the telegraph office at Irkutsk one day there stumbled an old man. His clothes were merely a bundle of rags stitched together with twine. But his face was deeply impressive for the refinement and nobility of its lines, his head for its proud carriage. His poverty and destitution were obviously not his fault. He walked over to the desk, took down a telegraph blank, and then, with a neat, cultured hand, wrote his message. He caught us looking at him and nodded in a friendly though sapient manner.

While riding cross-country one time we were stopped by a man, apparently not over forty, who begged alms of us. He was able-bodied and capable of work. We asked him why he did not earn his own living, and were about to give him a sound lecture on laziness when he handed us his passport. It was what is termed a "passport of a wolf," credentials that keep him wandering about from place to place as did that immortal Jew. The people are forbidden to allow him to stay in one town more than twenty-four hours. They may give him food and drink and shelter for a short time, but after that he must go on and on. He had been implicated in the revolutionary riots of 1905.

The third case is that of a girl of nineteen. With her mother and father and two brothers, she lived in Kharbin, in the heart of Chinese territory, but, unfortunately, on the zone of the Chinese Eastern Railroad that is controlled by Russian police. Three years ago, while talking to some of her school friends, she was overheard to lisp, "There ought to be a revolution." Immediately she was placed under arrest, and, without trial, thrown in prison. Her parents, cultured people of means, attempted to have her freed on bail. But the authorities would have none of it. She was a *political,* they claimed — though she was but sixteen and the hair hung down her back in braids. For three years this mere child was subjected to "third degree" inquisitions, the police believing her to hold the secrets of an empire-wide revolt that would over-topple the throne. For three years she protested her ignorance and innocence. In the spring of 1911 she was brought to trial and sentenced to three years. Her attorney pleaded for the mercy of the court, and the three years she had already served were taken for her sentence.

Your blood is up? So was ours! We venture to say, however, that even after her awful experiences, this young lady's spirit is far from broken and that she will serve — willingly — more sentences for further political activities, activities on which she, like about ninety per cent. of the educated youth of Russia, believes hangs the fate of her nation.

From this motley collection of immigrants, convicts, nomadic tribes, political and religious malcontents, the Russian Government hopes, in time, to build a united people. There will be Christian and Jew, Buddhist, Mohammedan and Fire-Worshiper. There will be white folks and yellow, and the tawny of skin, many tribes and many

tongues. Siberia is to be to Russia what the West is to the United States and Canada to Great Britain, part of a unified country.

That Siberia to-morrow may take her place in this dream of empire, the Government is tapping its riches and bringing them to the markets of the world by railroads constructed at enormous expense. She is sending out missionaries and building churches to lead the scattered tribes into the fold of the Greek Orthodox Faith and to inject into her own people at least a modicum of respect for the fundamental decencies. She is planting schools and fostering the new generation of those who go thither. She is erecting barracks and establishing troops throughout the land to remind the man in the street that "Russia is for the Russians" and that his will must be the will of the State.

Yet the day is very far off, indeed, when Siberia will take rank among the foremost colonies of the world.

Chapter VIII

ON TO STRETENSK

WE dined in the big station buffet of Irkutsk before catching the night train eastward. There is a waiter here who speaks a little American that he picked up some years ago on the Bowery — the only Siberian waiter we ran across who knew a word or two of anything resembling English.

It was about forty miles' run to the shore of Baikal. At this point one used to have to trans-ship to one of the two huge icebreakers, the Baikal or the Angarar, and be ferried across the great inland sea, train and all, to the railroad terminal on the opposite bank. But since 1905, a track takes the train round the rocky foreshore of the southern extremity.

As we crawled up her opposite shore at dawn, Baikal was a desolate sight, icebound and carpeted with snow as far as the eye could see. Snow-capped mountains towered abruptly to landward and the groves of birches along the creeks over which we were constantly thundering were smothered in deep drifts.

Now, on the eastern shore of Baikal, we began to see many more Tartars, Mongols, Booriats and Chinese. Some would be about on every station, and they were driving carts and sledges along the trails. In the afternoon we made a short stop at a little place called Tobolga, and here we found one of the only too rare exhibitions of

honesty to be encountered among the Siberian folk of humble status.

One of us had been sorting out a handful of small silver in the buffet, to pay for a glass of tea. He had left, by accident, a tiny Dutch coin on the counter. The man in charge of the bar left his post and ran a hundred yards down the platform to find us. He popped the coin into the hand of the owner and returned. He could not have expected a tip; the little coin was obviously too insignificant to have warranted that supposition.

Slowly toiling up a gradient in the early evening, we passed a lonely *verst* house. On a pile of logs at the side of the track near it stood a mite of a girl, holding up her dolly to see the train creep by. It was one of those naked and unashamed Dutch dolls. The child was wearing a pink flannelette petticoat. She had taken off her warm stuff skirt and held it in her arms with the pampered doll's bald head and décolleté bust emerging from the bunched-up frock waist.

There are 9,000 of these *verst* houses between Moscow and Vladivostok. Convicts — good conduct men and those who have served their time — are in charge. They are allowed a house and a little plot of ground, and they must patrol their *verst* of the track. But their life out there in the wilderness must be very, very lonely!

It was a mild evening, and a beautiful sunset splashed the heavens with salmon and green. As the afterglow faded into dusk, we ran into a zone of cleared forest where they were burning out stumps, firing the ground in great half moons that cast a lurid glow across the sky for miles around. When the walls of fire had swept on, pine stumps here and there remained flaring, as though bands of linkmen were passing through the hills.

At six o'clock next morning we ran into Chita, capital

of Trans-Baikalia. There was no doubt about it being Chita station. "Chita Station" was painted up on half a dozen boards.

"*Kargdah lee zdes staheet po est?*" we enquired of a conductor.

"*Pyetnats,*" he replied. Fifteen minutes.

We had wasted four minutes over dressing and a rapid wash, so breakfast in the buffet was a scurry. The coffee was much too hot to drink; and when we told them to bring us cold milk, they kept us waiting three minutes and brought a jugful on the boil, which was not conducive to one's peace of mind. That breakfast, in fact, was a fiasco, and we all but missed the train.

However, once aboard again, we lit our cigarettes and settled down comfortably in our bunks to pass the morning with books. The train rolled over a bridge, and came to a standstill. A fellow passenger explained that we had now arrived at Chita, where there was an excellent buffet and a stop of an hour and ten minutes for a leisurely breakfast. The other station was only a kind of preparatory. A thoroughly annoying incident this, being cheated at Chita.

However, Jack started the day well. He found a gray cat — the first cat we had seen in Siberia — in the yard of station-house 156, and chased it wildly up and down the freight sidings cheered on by a mob of sporting Muscovites, till a passing train glided between hound and quarry and gave pussy her escape.

The history of Chita is filled with romance. It was but a stockade in the Sixteenth Century. By 1825 the Government set it apart as a spot for banished *politicals*. Hither that year came the Dekabrists, those noble Polish revolutionaries. They and their ladies, making the best of a sorry plight, started in to develop Chita. They

Booriats, a tribe of the Lake Baikal region

Typical Booriat faces and costumes

drained the marshes, set up substantial buildings and formed literary societies. To-day the town still preserves the memory of these Volkhonskis, Trubetskois, Muriavers and Naryshkins. The main thoroughfare, Damskaia — Ladies Street — recalls the memory of those heroic women who followed their husbands into exile.

On the platform at Chita we passed the panting locomotive and came suddenly upon that awe-inspiring melodrama of daily Siberian life, taking the mails aboard a train.

The post-office coach, with its crossed post-horns painted on its sides and dainty blinds of flounced Holland in the windows, was up forward near the baggage coach. It was the town policeman girt about with a sword and a heavy revolver who blocked our path and excitedly waved us to go away, far away. It was the two big station policemen, also armed to the teeth, who blocked the platform in the other direction. Between them circulated three post-office clerks, two of them wearing revolvers, and the other with a gleaming butt poking out of his greatcoat pocket.

The mails, in long, shabby black leather sacks laced down one side with a bright steel chain, had been driven to the station in the dirty, ramshackle farm cart that was backed up near by. All the parcels and registered mail packets were dumped loose on the gravel underfoot. They had been brought to the station, loose then, on the floor of the cart, a floor that held at least one crack big enough for you to put your foot through. Probably sacks are more costly than the services of a handful of perambulating arsenals; besides, there is the gratuitous dignity of the scene.

A mailing slot is let into the side of the Siberian mail coach. An old woman had hurried down from the town that morning, to take advantage of this opportunity for

late mailing, but the police made her stand aside for twenty minutes till the leisurely loading had been accomplished and the massive steel doors of the coach swung back, bolted. barred and padlocked, before they would let her step forward and pop her letter in the slot.

A few moments later, a train came in from the east, out Mongolia way, and there descended upon us the hordes of Tartary. Quite 200 Booriats, men, women and children, any one of a score of whose costumes would need a page of detailed description, surged out to the hack stand and eagerly sifted transportation bids. The tribe in its curious hats and richly colored garments, the women wearing in their hair and dangling on cords handfuls of strange metal trinkets that would have been the envy of a museum curator, bargained fiercely for many minutes with the *istvostchiks* before resigning itself to a minimum rate of forty *kopecks* for as many as could crowd into each little chaise. Then with yellings and howls and crackings of whips, off galloped the entire station hack-rank of the city of Chita. One wondered whither.

At midday we came to Karimskaia, the little station where the track of the Trans-Siberian bifurcates, one line — the original Trans-Siberian — running northeast to Stretensk, the other passing over the bridge, on to Manchuria and the Pacific.

The seven hour run to Stretensk was the most picturesque stage of the train journey. The line followed the Shilka bank, now half a mile of flat pasture or dense willow swamp separating it from the river, now creeping round a narrow ledge blasted out of the living rock, with the swirling ice débris grinding the face of the cliff below.

You do not see anything in the home newspapers about small accidents — derailings and the like — on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, but they are frequent. Time and

again no steps have been taken to buttress up the huge crags that jut out and even overhang the track where it creeps under the scarred flank of a mountain or through a rock cutting. For the most part, the rocks are not solid. They lie, shattered into fragments, wrapped in a yielding packing of clay which is crumbled and softened by the action of successive frosts and thaws and the periodical vibration of passing trains. On two occasions on that journey between Chita and Stretensk, we happened to glance up at the moment of embankment slides. Once a couple of bushels of shale came down with a run, and once a barrowload of soil and stones, with a lump of rock twice the size of an alderman's head, tumbled down to the very edge of the rails beneath our wheels.

We passed along the winding river valley, through hill country that reminded one not a little of the Adirondacks. The snow had passed away from the southern slopes of the hills, leaving them tinted in washes of bistre, splashed with dark green and golden lichens. Now and then, by the river, however, came a gorgeous mass of color, swamps picked out with the most vivid crimson and old gold where clumps of willows were sloughing off their flaked brown winter bark. We caught a glimpse of the first welcome butterfly of the year, the familiar small tortoiseshell such as is found in North America and the British Isles.

The hills reminded us that we were in Trans-Baikalia's mining center — though practically all of that province is mountain land. Every day government and private mining engineers and prospectors are making fresh finds in Trans-Baikalia and in the Altai, and as yet only a small fraction of the great territory of Siberia has been explored by men with a knowledge of mineralogy. These facts should be kept in mind by statisticians and those

who see nothing but an agricultural future for the country.

Some indication of the minerals present, their quantity and location, may be gleaned from the following notes.

The Urals produce nine tons of gold annually, forty per cent. of which comes from the Orenburg Government in Russia proper. Both quartz and placer workings are widely distributed.

In Western Siberia and the Governments of Tomsk and Yeniseisk, however, placers are almost worked out. Their output is insignificant and hardly pays for the labor. There is placer gold present in nearly every Siberian river and creek. It is found in the tributaries of the Amur and Shilka; rich deposits along the Angarar, and near the mouth of the Amur. Recently such rich finds were made along the Amur that the majority of the skilled artisans brought out from Russia by the Government to work on the Amur railroad construction, threw down their tools and joined the prospectors.

In the south Yeniseisk Government there were, until recently, thirty dredges on the placer workings on the Uderi river. These workings had been started as long ago as 1834 and between that period and 1895 produced the huge amount of 30,000 *poods* (1,080,000 pounds) of gold.

But it is the Lena creeks, up in the north, that are the home of most of the Siberian placers. This is, by far, the greatest and richest placer gold field in the world. Its center is the little town of Bordaibo, at the junction of the Bordaibo creek with the Lena.

Quartz gold, gold that cannot be secured in paying quantities by the poor man, but that needs an expensive cyanide crushing plant, is also found in the Lena creeks, near and in the Urals, and north of Irkutsk. Engineers are

Lake Baikal, from which flows the Angarar River

prospecting for quartz gold near Stretensk on the Shilka. Extensive deposits occur in the Nerchinsk district.

Silver has been mined in the Altai for a century and a half, and is not extensively found in Trans-Baikalia. At Gavrielovsk, near Salaiyeer in southern Siberia, there was a big silver smelting works, but it has been a ruin for the last generation. There are paying mines at Oust Kara on the north bank of the Shilka below Stretensk. They are operated by convict labor, which, by the way, produces only half the results you can get from free men with profit-sharing in view.

There is a big copper mine 120 miles south of Atchinsk, central Siberia, the property of the Yenisei Copper Company, and managed by a resident Englishman. Copper is also mined on the Kirghiz steppes, east of Tcheliabinsk, and there are the large Sparroski mines in the Semipalatinsk region of southwest Siberia. There are very rich deposits of copper on the upper Angarar, in Trans-Baikalia, and south of Baikal.

Plentiful deposits of iron are everywhere in mountainous regions, especially in the foothills of the Urals; at Bratskoi on the Angarar where there is a large mine. So prolific are the Ural iron fields and so much nearer Russia that capitalists will not yet sink money opening up reserve Siberian fields. In many cases before this can be done on a larger scale, railway transportation will have to be more available. Iron mines of prehistoric days are found in the Altai, relics of the Han Dynasty of China.

There are a number of great coal fields in Siberia. Yet a while, however, wood fuel is so plentiful that coal is hard put to compete with it. Recently the price of wood has gone up considerably in the bare steppe region around and at Omsk, with the result that Omsk is beginning to prove a good customer to the developers of mid-Siberian

coal fields. In the Tomsk district 50,000 tons are excavated annually. This comes principally from Koonetsk, two or three hundred miles south of Tomsk where there is a coal area the size of Belgium. It has eighteen to forty feet veins. A couple of years ago an English engineer came out and pronounced this coal equal to the best Cardiff product.

Colonel Savlovski informed us that he sells coal at the pit mouth on his Irkutsk property at the astonishing price of five *kopecks* (two and a half cents) per *pood*.

Salt is found in the Barnaoul district. Here there are salt lakes of from one to ten *versts* in length in great numbers. One hundred thousand tons of salt are taken each year from Lake Koriakiv in this district.

Mr. Speight of Tomsk had an amusing story to tell us apropos of the Barnaoul lakes. A friend of his bought a big salt lake on the supposition that it would do as did its neighbors, dry up when the summer months came around. Summer came and went. Every other lake in the district went dry, but this recent purchase kept aggressively full. Next summer it was, if anything, more full than ever. The owner was a stubborn man. Friends advised him to get engineers and set them to work draining. He refused to listen. He refused to go out of his way to make terms with the lake.

The years came and went. The embittered owner grew older and older, and feebler and feebler, and the lake grew more and more aggressive, until it became positively insolent. Thirteen years after its purchase it actually overflowed in the height of summer and flooded several neighboring pools that had evaporated. That seemed to break the old man's spirit. Two years later, fifteen years after his unfortunate purchase, the old man died.

The next spring his heirs came along with men and

machinery, ran a ditch round the lake and drew off water. During the last year they have obtained nearly a million and a half *poods* of fine salt from this spot.

Precious stones thus far have not been mined seriously in Siberia. Last year numbers of emeralds were located at a spot on the banks of the Angarar. They are found also in the Minnisinsk district and in the Yeniseisk Mountains.

Diamonds have not yet been discovered in Siberia. Experts believe, however, that the diamond will be one of the many precious stones brought to light when prospectors have examined Trans-Baikalia. This mountainous region presents many of the chief characteristics of the world's leading precious stone districts, but as yet, it has only been toyed with.

Amethysts are plentiful in Siberia, especially in Trans-Baikalia and the Altai. The Urals are rich in them. They often crop up quite near the surface of the ground; many are actually plowed up by peasants, though in the rough there is not much to indicate their value.

But let us drop the mineral data and continue the journey to Stretensk.

Nerchinsk of mining fame, we passed in the dusk; and shortly before ten o'clock we drew into the station of Stretensk, where the rails of the old Trans-Siberian system cease, with symbolic abruptness, at the foot of a towering cliff of limestone that stands squarely across its path. A mere sprinkling of small plank houses, the homes of railroad men, cluster on the steep hillside behind the station. The town of Stretensk lies on the opposite bank of the swiftly-flowing Shilka or upper Amur, here rather more than a quarter of a mile wide.

After the fifty hour train journey from Irkutsk, we all bustled joyfully out on the platform with hotels and nice

warm beds looming large in our thoughts — only to be told laconically that, as the ice was just beginning to run out of the Shilka and its feeders, the boatmen did not care to take any risks after dark, and that everyone would have to squat on their baggage in the buffet room, like good philosophers, till eight o'clock in the morning.

You may imagine what a scene that announcement would have made had it been sprung upon a trainload of tired Americans. Think of the incredulous exclamations, the angry protests, the sheaves of threatened letters to the newspapers; the fiery and over-adjectival conversation that would vibrate the rafters of the waiting-room!

Russia can be excited on occasion, but never, never, on being confronted by delays. Everyone took the matter with the utmost nonchalance. *Neitchevo!* with a shrug, was the correct attitude. And while the bachelor element among us made itself cosy at the tables with flasks of *vodka* and nips of alleged cognac, the staider men gathered up their wives and families and encamped in nooks and crannies among the softer constituents of the mountainous piles of baggage.

From a purely personal point of view, it was a ghastly night. Every now and then, until dawn, someone would wade over our sleeping selves and snatch away what happened to be officiating as our pillow, mattress or leg-rest. Three successive pillows and two of the most sensuously comfortable back-rests in or out of Christendom were thus torn away from us in less than an hour. And all night long, at intervals of a few seconds, someone would dash into or out of the buffet, through the door that grated loudly on its hinges and lapsed into a long-drawn, protestant squeak.

We roused up at six. Bright sunshine was streaming through the windows. The tables were still thronged with

an eating and drinking crowd. No one showed any alacrity to get out and about.

"*Monsieur, ce n'est pas possible, je vous assure. A huit heures. A huit heures!*" replied the young lieutenant with whom we had been chatting last evening, when we asked why in the name of common sanity it should be necessary to wait till eight o'clock for a safe crossing, when the sun was already blazing in the heavens.

Nevertheless, we gathered up our baggage and went out to the river bank. Already, as we had fully expected, ferries were plying — two big, flat-bottomed barges. From what one could see through the slight haze that dimmed the far side of the river, there seemed to be some hitch in embarking at that terminal. A large crowd thronged the bank there, watching operations.

In a few minutes, however, a barge got away, and, crammed with standing passengers, came swiftly down in a drift of broken ice. On account of the inshore water having frozen hard during the night, she had some trouble getting in; and the passengers had to be landed in carts.

By this time our bank was crowded with three times the capacity of the barge, everyone eager to avoid a long wait for the next. Only by a moving picture film and a number of talking machines could justice be done to the way that barge took aboard her complement of passengers.

While the drivers lashed their horses down the stony beach and through yards of shallow ice mush to the craft, fat men and screaming women, officers tripping over their swords, three men with dogs on leads that caught around one's legs, and white-aproned porters with the set features of men going into battle against heavy odds, flung their baggage-encumbered persons upon the four small carts, and, being fortunate enough to clamber on, clung together — sitting, standing, kneeling — on the flat and quite bul-

warkless floor, in a swaying, heaving conglomeration, like a swarm of bees. To the accompaniment of piercing shrieks from the ladies, a stout merchant, a dachshund and two young officers of the 16th Siberski Regiment were shed into the freezing water on the spasmodic rush to the barge. Jack and two other dogs barked themselves hoarse. A woman got her skirt caught in the wheel of the cart and nearly yelled the heavens down at the imminent prospect of having that garment ripped off her back should the horse elect to make a move before she had been disentangled. And when our cartload had got aboard, another dog sprang over the side of the barge and swam ashore, its master vainly beseeching the populace, with all the strength of his lungs, to drive it back. Meanwhile the drivers and the navigators of the barge were exchanging clamorous incivilities concerning the inability of the latter to bring their craft broadside on to the thick ice. And from the shore, to add a finishing touch to the pandemonium, came wild and eminently justifiable laughter.

Eventually men, women and children, dogs and baggage, were jammed tightly into every square foot of the ferry, and off we started up stream, swaying dangerously.

The current was very swift, and at every few yards we bumped heavily into a huge chunk of passing ice. Torrents of advice, good, bad, and merely silly, were poured upon the three stalwart *moudjiks* who poled us. Like the humble worm in the proverb, at length, they turned and began to ladle out acrimonious back-chat to some of the more fatuous grumblers. Then the barge took sides, some of us standing up for the protesting passengers, some for the bargees.

Meanwhile, we were, of course, not only making no headway, but we were actually drifting back. Presently

The crossing of the Shilka at Stretensk was hindered by huge floating cakes of ice

we found ourselves face to face with another crisis — which side of an approaching floe to make for? Whether there would be enough water in that channel to float us? Whether it would be better to land here or there? Twice we all but capsized, on account of a woman in the stern backing like a startled prawn when a dog put its wet paws on her clean skirt.

At last, after a pantomimic cruise of twenty minutes, we disembarked on a big ice floe in midstream, crossed a hundred yards of it afoot, and entered another barge that took us over the narrow channel along the town bank to shore in Stretensk.

Chapter IX

STRETENSK IN TRANS-BAIKALIA

STRETENSK in Trans-Baikalia ought to gain in popularity with travelers as the years roll on, for it is one of the rare spots in Siberia where you are not pounced upon to produce a passport before any law-abiding hotel will have anything to do with you.

The little Cossack town straggles for a couple of miles or so along the southern bank of the Shilka, springing up under the flank of a forest-clad mountain and fading down to a welter of barracks and dust-smothered drilling grounds to the northeast.

There are only some 6,000 persons in Stretensk to-day, but after Chita, it is the most important town in Trans-Baikalia. A couple of thousand soldiers, in addition to the 6,000 civilians, are quartered in the barracks, which are only a day's train journey from Manchuria. And the garrison is being augmented every month. When the big Chinese attack on defenceless Kharbin, expected by all Russians in the Far East, comes to startle the world, Stretensk will be able to rush thousands of men to that city in less than forty-eight hours, two days before the vanguard of the Irkutsk garrison arrives. The presence of troops in this region, it might be added, is not without significance. Russia is said to have 500,000 men east of Baikal. Barracks are building all along the line of Northern Manchuria — at Chita, at Nerchinsk, at Stretensk, at Blagowestchensk.

The incursion of foreigners to Stretensk is a rare event. An automobile draws a big street crowd. No one speaks French even in the two banks, though a good many business men and the bank clerks can converse in German. The only faltering words of English — a very few and queer words at that — which will greet your ears, come from the lips of a small boy in the big whitewashed shop on the water front uptown. He learned enough from a mining engineer who had employed him in Nerchinsk to estimate a bill of ours at "feety" *roubles* instead of five.

Nearly 2,000 Stretenski are Chinese. Yet you never see a Chinese woman or child, even after passing some time about the cantonments in which their quarters are located. On the streets, you are rarely out of sight of a Chinaman. In the very heart of the town where the Celestials inhabit log huts around wide-gated yards back of the Russian shops, you can find yourself out of sight of any white man for several minutes, surrounded only by the Chinese. They do the unskilled manual labor of the town, much as the Italians and Sicilians are utilized along the east coast of the United States to-day. Many, too, are carpenters, tall cheery fellows, laughing the day long and always chattering away in their thin, high-pitched palatal tongue.

During the recent plague outbreak around Kharbin, the Chinese of Stretensk were badly hit, for not only would Russians cross to the other side of the road when they saw a Celestial approaching, but Chinese were not allowed inside most of the shops and no employer would give them work.

It was just at the Russian Easter, thirteen days after ours, that we were in Stretensk. A spirit of something approaching animation pervaded the shops and markets. There are no large plate-glass shop fronts in this town.

It is a haunt of small and dirty general stores. As over ninety per cent. of the inhabitants are quite illiterate, each shop hangs outside a big board with painted pictures of lurid hams or deformed boots or wonderfully cut suits of clothes and strange cooking utensils. Among the Russian shops are the Chinese booths, opium smoking and tea drinking dens, each of the latter with a projecting pole from the tip of which dangles a piece of wood painted with a little blue teapot on a red stool. The Chinese stores make no display of goods in their windows. Everything is kept in mysterious sacks within.

The streets are unlighted, unpaved, uncleaned and ankle-deep in fine dust. The high winds sweeping through them raise such dust storms as to obscure objects a few feet away, and, some days, to clear every person off them as quickly as a thunder shower.

Among the booths on the water front we found a Chinese lecturer with a little entertainment calculated to combine amusement with sound instruction. He had a gayly painted miniature Punch and Judy show fitted with three peep holes. Before them was ranged a pair of wooden trestles. You paid your three *kopecks* and sat you down with your eyes glued to a hole and the breath of the eager unwashed of Stretensk hot on the nape of your neck as they strove for stolen peeps.

The old Chinaman gave a preliminary cough, fiddled with a row of colored strings in the wings, and up went the curtain on the first scene — four photographs tinted pink and yellow, just ordinary mounted cabinet photographs of Celestial family groups such as litter the windows of photographers in the treaty ports to-day.

The lecturer started off with his rapid sing-song Chinese patter, adopting in his tone the exaggerated em-

The Stretensk fire department maintains a watch-tower, from which a lookout for fires is kept

phasis of a man taking his babies through the exciting and harrowing incidents of the Tale of the Three Bears. That we were obviously not natives of China and that our companion was obviously a Russian made no difference to him. The lecture was a part of your three *kopecks'* worth and you had to have it, be you Russian, American or Ethiopian.

The second was a crudely colored print of a lamasery, on sale at most of the market bookstalls in Siberia. And we were treated accordingly to a painstaking three minute harangue on lamaseries, with tantalizing elusive gestures that were seemingly explaining something very curious and interesting that goes on inside these mysterious establishments.

Scene three was rather a shock — an advertisement of a firm of Russian importers, with the steamer *Odessa* taking aboard a cargo of tea chests at a Chinese wharf. On the left stood a tall tower of gigantic colored sardine tins, in graduated sizes, resting naturally enough on the wharf, but utterly unscaled to the picture. It would have been interesting to know how Ling Poo Me explained them away. Perhaps he gave them as a glimpse of the canned whale industry of Canton.

The next scene took a few seconds of special preparation, but when it came it was well worth the hitch. Up went the curtain on a fine pair of wings, carven out of a German beer advertisement, with the usual smirking tourists, accompanied by a red and white Noah's ark dog, sitting on mossy rocks by a plashing mountain waterfall, quaffing deep steins of So-and-So's Renowned Munich Ale. Between these were shown, one after the other, a pair of Chinese rice paper prints of fat warriors in armor, leaping in grotesque postures to intimidate the enemy, and

repelling a fierce dragon and its mate. A row of Parisian photographs in questionable taste concluded the performance.

The Chinese of Stretensk have their unfenced graveyard in a birch grove a *verst* up the hillside behind town. Here are a dozen or more mounds marked with perpendicular wooden stakes. Every grave has before it a little heap of charred ashes, littered with the red stubs of joss sticks; and on top of the mound is a handful of food swathed in soft tissue paper, food lest the dead grow hungry. Fumbling with our cameras, we chanced to look around. To our horror we discovered fox-terrier Jack making a hearty meal off the victuals he was filching from a number of worthy Celestial ghosts. Most fortunately there was no one in sight, or Stretensk would have been several degrees too hot to hold us that evening.

The nomad Chinese in Siberian towns often have the home industry of cigarette making. Now and then they pack several large boxes into an antique Scotch plaid carpet bag, and make a round of the homes and hotels hawking their wares. One of these hawkers ran us to earth. We sampled his cigarettes, found them vile, and refused to make a purchase, proffering a ten-*kopeck* piece for the experiment. He refused, with a smile, to accept it. During the previous months we had disbursed, for insignificant services, baksheesh galore to Americans, Britons, Dutch, Belgians, French, Germans, Russians, Poles, Siberians and Trans-Baikalians, but it remained for this humble Celestial of Stretensk to be man enough to recognize insufficient grounds for a tip and to refuse one.

We have not said much about the amusements of Stretensk. Well, there are none. Now and again, strolling concert parties or gangs of actors descend upon the little

town at Eastertide and during the summer, to give a few desultory performances before retiring to the comparative whirl of wordly activities at Irkutsk and Tomsk. Some days before our arrival, there had been a "Carmen" company. The opera was presented in our hotel on a stage about fifteen feet square, and a single pianist undertook the whole of the orchestral duties.

There is a decrepit barn with faded banners and posters where some rash spirit once started a moving picture show, but the "kill-joys" of Stretensk set their faces against such a display of extravagant gayety and the doors had soon to be closed.

As a matter of fact, the chief amusement to be found in the town, and one we cordially and confidentially recommend to anyone who may be so fortunate as to find himself in Stretensk, is to make a round of the four or five photographers' wall cases displayed on the chief streets. As a human interest menagerie they would be hard to equal. It is apparently the fashion just now for grown-up young women, whose features are not exactly conspicuous for refinement, to get themselves photographed with their hair loosely around their necks and busts, which gives them the distrait aspect of the heroine of a dime novel melodrama about to leap to destruction off Brooklyn Bridge. And why will all the men in the cabinet photographs seat themselves squarely and solidly upon the chair in the center of the picture, leaving their good ladies to stand disconsolately in the rear? The military officers are just as bad in this respect as their men.

Easter Saturday morning early we went down to the post-office to mail some letters, and found a great crowd besieging the doors, which had not been opened. There were all sorts and conditions of people — officers of the garrison, Chinese, Cossacks come in to take the Easter mail

back to the barracks, and dozens of men and women in slovenly Western dress in place of the rough and ready peasant clothes of everyday life. Everyone seemed to be sending Easter greetings to everyone else — letters or post-cards — and there was a heavy money-order transmission. The post-office clerks, realizing the possibilities of a large crowd, were selling, in addition to stamps, sets of vulgar French and German postcards.

The post-office at Stretensk is an exception to the general rule, inasmuch as it has not women clerks to attend to the public though it conforms to the point of having women at the telegraph counters upstairs. The women telegraph clerks of Siberia are not a lovable race. They are generally sluggish, tied up in shawls, homely, elderly and snappish, and they struck us as remarkably dense of understanding.

There is, for instance, a regulation which requires the affixing of the address of the sender of the wire to the official form. It should obviously be waived in the case of travelers. You explain to the old lady that you are a homeless wanderer, that you have just left your hotel and are about to board a train for X or Y. That avails you nothing. The Government considers that you ought to have an address, and there's an end of it! We only hope that the statutes of international law do not provide for extradition of the forgers of false addresses on Siberian telegrams!

Though much has been done of late years to improve matters, the postal system of Siberia is still a disgrace to civilization. Individual experiences, of course, differ, and one cannot prejudice the system from an instance or two. However, on the whole, it is far from reliable. Foreign business firms trading in the country told us there is a constant percentage of losses with both their incoming

and outgoing mail. The registered letter system may or may not be of use, according to local conditions which may vary considerably. So long as a registered envelope is delivered at its destination, we were told, no claim can be put in for the loss of contents *en route*. Many registered letters do lose their contents in this manner, though a Dane in Irkutsk told us he had sent a long series of dummy packages home, with a view to "getting rich quick" on loss indemnities, and all the packets had chanced to arrive in Copenhagen unharmed, with a sickening regularity.

Mail conditions are better, so far as outgoing letters are concerned, in towns than in the country. Any serious and regular interference with mail would bring all the merchants of a city about the ears of the postmaster. Even then, registered letters frequently do go astray.

As to incoming mail, several of our letters never reached us and only one of a number of postcards was delivered. Bundles of newspapers were frequently opened before delivery, a few papers being brought around at each call of the postman. *The Academy* was usually the last to arrive, the censors apparently finding the depths of its erudition a formidable stumbling block.

While in Stretensk we were privileged to see the Siberian at a time when his religious fervor is, perhaps, most fervent. It was Holy Week and Easter. On the eve of Palm Sunday all the lights in the houses were extinguished and the people crowded into the churches. At a little desk in the vestibule each person bought a candle. A long, mournful office was chanted in the dark, and when it was finished, a light was brought from behind the *Ikonistran,* or screen that separates the sanctuary from the congregation. One by one the people went forward, with many genuflections, and touched the wicks of their

tapers to the lighted candle. Guarding the precious flames in the hollow of their hands, they slowly went homeward with the holy fire to light their extinguished lamps. Some even brought lanterns to carry their candles in. Stretensk that night after service looked like fairy land.

Beside this fresh light there was given to the faithful a branch of cedar, much after our own custom of the distribution of palms. We were hardly of the faithful, but each was given a twig, and, with the rest of the congregation, left the church. As soon as the street was reached, the younger element seemed to forget what the cedar branch typified — or possibly it was a religious custom — and whenever they met a friend, struck him on the back with it. One such struck us, not on the back, but across the face, a deliberate, stinging blow. We resented it. In the mêlée that followed, a policeman suddenly put in his appearance. It was only after much detailed explanation and telling the officer that Main Street of Stretensk was worse than Broadway on New Year's Eve, that we were released. The cause of the blow, we later discovered, is that an American is most decidedly *persona non grata* in Siberia. The Siberian, as does his Russian brother, believes that Roosevelt jumped into the Russo-Japanese altercation just at the moment when Russia was about to turn the tables on her enemies. And so whenever he gets a chance, the Russian will take out his feelings on the stray American who happens in his small town. We were glad to know that we were justified in thrashing that patriotic youth of Stretensk.

Russia does not keep Easter as we do. She extends the celebration throughout the octave or seven successive days. During Holy Week, all amusements, music at hotels, theaters, and such public frivolities, are hushed

The Chinese lecturer of Stretensk and his audience

The typical condition of a main street in a Siberian town, Stretensk

and the populace gathers in the churches. When they are not at church, they are generally busy in the shops, for the next week all shops are closed. Easter must be a gigantic drawback to Russian commercial life. Business is at an absolute standstill while the devout celebrate the Resurrection. And such celebration! Men salute each other on Easter morning with the words, "Christ is risen!" kiss — and then go home to drink *vodka*. By Easter night the town is generally debauched; and the revels continue for the whole seven days with feastings and exchange of gifts, and gallons of *vodka*. When one sees, for example, two priests, maudlin with drink, rolling down the main street in their blue cassocks shouting at the top of their lungs "Christ is risen!" he begins to doubt the efficacy of week-long holy celebrations.

There is another side to the revels that is quite commendable. Each town erects amusements for the youngsters to play on — swings, giant strides, see-saws. We found them well patronized during Easter Week.

One day we crossed the river and went up a glen to call on Mr. Otto Vogler, the Danish manager of the Stretensk Brewery, and his charming wife, who has lived in London and speaks English well. We mentioned that our passports had not been asked for and wondered what had become of the police.

"There are only two policemen in town," replied Mrs. Vogler. "Crime is rarely or never detected here. Matters simply resolve themselves into your having to pit yourself against the criminal who bothers you. The better man wins. The victim is buried, and there is an end of the question. An arrest is not often made.

"If there is any serious trouble you send for the station police, the big, fine-looking men in the long drab coats, whom you must have noticed at the railway termi-

nus. The town police are nonentities, but few ruffians care to try conclusions with the men from the station."

In the summer, when a good many Chinese are employed about the lonely little brewery buildings, the Voglers adopt the salutory warning in fashion at Irkutsk, and discharge a shotgun from the window every night before going to bed to show that a warm reception awaits prospective raiders and cutthroats.

The inhabitants of Siberian villages and suburbs live always in mortal terror of the *brodjagi,* those vagrant bands of escaped criminals who rob and kill at ease. They will loot a church or burgle a house, and murder the inmates if their work is disturbed. With about one policeman to every 10,000 inhabitants in Siberia, there is little chance of these outlaws being apprehended. Trans-Baikalia has more than its share of *brodjagi.* An estimate made a few years ago placed them at 20,000.

Chapter X

DOWN WITH THE SHILKA ICE

AT Stretensk we found farmers building a sturdy boat, a boat with three-inch bottom boards and buttressed gunwales. We waded into the straw of the cattle-byre where they were shaping her, surrounded by wondering little Siberian cows and black sheep with white faces, and bought her into bondage for our coming conflict with the Shilka ice.

The *Why Not?* was a stout little craft, eighteen feet long with a beam of three, flat-bottomed, and built rather on the lines of a gunning punt. Into her we packed ourselves, our stores and blankets, fox-terrier Jack and the concertina that he subsequently destroyed, two sacks containing cigarettes and tobacco, sundry cameras, field glasses, fur coats, sledge-bells, lint and bandages, revolvers and claret, quinine pills, kettles and axes, twine and coal oil, cholera mixture and candles, the Old Testament, a work on the diseases of dogs, an Oscar Wilde, many onions and luminous paint. Shoved off by a couple of passing Cossacks, we started on our attempt to ignore the existence and potentialities of drift ice and voyage down to the Manchurian frontier.

The ice was coming down, or would be coming down for three weeks or a month, they told us, but as there was a good deal of fairly clear water, we banked on being able, with care, to take advantage of the swift current and rapidly make our way through the narrow waters

to the junction of the Soungari, where the Amur broadens out to a couple of miles, thence south to Kharbin. We were told that the Shilka-Amur navigation authorities at Stretensk not only forbade all boat traffic, but even the sale of craft at the town boatyards until the ice should have disappeared.

So we bought the *Why Not?* in a village on the opposite bank and had her hauled down to a point below town only a few minutes before our departure. There was no time for the police or navigation people to realize the situation. With our own hands we slid her off her wheels, launched her, and got away.

Downstream we ran into a barrier of ice — the first of many — and had to crawl out on to the eddying drift and labor for a couple of hours to get through. Then we went on, one of us at the oars, the other staving off passing chunks of ice with the pole, till round the corner we came in sight of a three-mile reach, jammed and motionless from bank to bank. We landed and encamped.

Day by day the ground was frozen hard, so hard that though spring was well advanced in our calendar, our axes blunted and could make no impression when we tried to cut turfs with which to thatch our hut.

The night temperatures, for late April, were hardly idyllic. Usually we found a thermometer reading of from 14 to 18 degrees of frost inside our rude shelter on awakening at dawn. We were handicapped by having no tent; there was none to be purchased in the Siberian towns. At each new camping place we had to rig up a fresh shelter of logs and blankets and branches and stray garments.

The wolves were always unpleasantly in evidence; in the morning we would find their clawed tracks all around in the snow. However, we took precautions to avoid a

The *Why Not?* was hauled on wheels to the river

Jack, a dog with individuality and a hatred of concertinas

night surprise by man or beast. Two complete circles, outer and inner, were marked out with stout thread, and sledge bells hung along them at intervals. In the center of the inner circle was our shelter. The bells were of two sizes and tones; nothing could approach us without plunging into the outer or inner circle, and each circle had its distinctive clang. Jack was a plucky little beast, but he did not love wolf scent and used to get very uneasy some nights, refusing to come to bed and standing at the "door" of our shelter, his back hair a-bristle. On several occasions, the bells rang as wolves brushed against them. We did not trouble to answer the bell. Whoever happened to be nearer the Colt, picked it up and emptied three or four shots in the right direction. After that we would usually be free from interference for the rest of the night.

The wolf is very much in evidence throughout Siberia, though in smaller packs than formerly. In the Salaiyeer Mountains his tracks were everywhere in the snow. It is really safer, they say in Siberia, to live next door to the home of a wolf-pack than to establish one's farm miles away. Like the fraudulent company promoter and other beasts of prey, the Siberian wolf has a penchant toward peace and quietness at home. He does not like to annoy the neighbors. When he embarks on a marauding expedition, he trots off ten or twenty miles.

The Kirghizes, that nomadic tribe in Western Siberia, have no respect for the wolf. They ride after him on horseback, and instead of shooting, kill him by smashing in his skull with an axe or a club. Some train hawks and hunt wolves with them.

The Siberian bear, on the other hand, is rather an elusive individual. He occurs almost everywhere near mountains and forests but he does not seem to be plentiful

or malicious. He is seldom seen by the wayfarer, and rarely, if ever, attacks a man unless cornered. The growing demand for his skin has set a high price on his head and driven him far back from farm track and log hut. A decade ago bear skins could be bought for eight or ten *roubles,* but they now cost from twenty-five to fifty, according to the time of the year. The scarcity of bear skin is quite comparable with the scarcity of sable. In fact, a law has just been enforced in Siberia prohibiting the killing of these animals for the next three years because they have become almost exterminated.

Mention might be made, before telling of the rest of the cruise, of three unpleasant surprises sprung upon us by the Fates in connection with our commissary department.

When laying up provisions at Stretensk, we came across a particularly cheap brand of cigarettes put up in large boxes. The shopman gave us samples to try, and we ordered three boxes to be sent around to our hotel. We opened them a few days down the river, and found them to be mere empty tubes, ready for filling with separately purchased tobacco.

Beware of the cocoa you buy in Siberia. Our tin, a large one, turned out by a Moscow manufacturer, was just one-third full.

At Stretensk, not caring to risk our lives with such brandy as was available, we bought a flagon of something yellow that stood among the liquors on a wine merchant's counter. By studying its label and the government alcohol stamp, we came to the conclusion that it was one of the less nauseating of the many kinds of doctored and flavored *vodkas.* It had a fragrant aroma and was not unpalatable as an aid to thawing oneself out in the cold dawns down the Shilka banks. And it came in very useful, what was left of it, at Ookteechenskaia. The grand-

mother of the household in which we stayed was very crabbed and hated to cross the yard to the store-shed for butter and milk though she knew we would pay many times their value. As the time for every meal came around, she said she had no butter or milk; then we gave her a nip of this beverage in an egg cup. She tossed it down, smacked her lips, and waddled off — to return with whatever we wanted. She got rid of nearly half a pint during our stay. Jack, too, liked the stuff; we fed it to him on biscuits till he got quite cheerful. Altogether we felt that that flagon was a success.

Then, one night, came a mining engineer to the post station of Ookteechenskaia, a Russian bound east for Oust Kara. He saw grandmother take her customary night-cap and asked to look at the bottle. He took a sniff at it to confirm his diagnosis, nodded his head, and told us that it happened to be lavender water! *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

The cold used to wake us at dawn at our first camp on the Shilka. Then we would get breakfast, which was not a very simple matter. Everything was frozen — eggs, stone-hard; butter that crumbled like sandstone, bread feathery with frost and as hard as rock, meat, onions and condensed milk quite hard, and sometimes the catastrophe of both kettles — the kettle and "The Kid," its supernumerary — having been left containing tea and hot water over night, and now, in consequence, being simply chunks of solid ice. First we had to unfreeze ourselves, and then we unfroze breakfast.

After breakfast, as the sun crept rosily over the opposite hills, we had to go a-woodgathering out on the ice jam. There was not much fuel around camp, but fortune had favored us in sending down a quantity of boatyard and sawmill débris among the churned drift ice. Up to about

six o'clock in the morning the night's frost held the loose fragments sufficiently firm to bear one, but it was not pleasant to venture out into midstream, some hundred yards from shore, after that hour.

Jack trotted out after us and was always first to make use of the planks we took to bridge over thin patches. At the outset he was terrified by the phenomenon of ice. He seemed to feel all the instinctive horror of a well-bred civilized dog at being expected to cavort and caracol among what must have been glass to him, glass on which you could — nay, on which you were actually encouraged to — spring, and fall through with a crash without a spell of durance vile in a kennel or coal cellar as a sequel. Then he adjusted his cosmos anew, and went to the other extreme. He reveled in the ice, pranced on it, rolled in it, smashed it with a gusto.

He took to sneaking off by himself and taking his inquiring nose for long walks on the ice jam when we had returned from gathering fuel. And whereas we knew that it wasn't healthy to go exploring the midstream ice after seven A. M. at the latest, Jack didn't. We would suddenly miss him. No reply would come to a call. Taking a pair of long planks we would set out from the shore and presently find, crooked on to the thin ice by a hole, a couple of wet forepaws on which rested the dripping chin and wistful, imploring features of a very miserable little dog, cramped by the icy water and on the point of sinking back helpless. The planks would be pushed out, one of us would wriggle precariously along within arm's reach, and effect a rescue. All this time the soft mush ice was melting, and it used to be a fortunate return trip indeed, when one or the other or both of us, did not put a foot and leg through the ice. There was a perpetual drying of boots and socks at the camp-fire on Jack's account.

At night, of course, he slept in the shelter with us. He was very popular as a foot warmer, though for two or three nights his supremacy in this respect was threatened by a tin bucket-stove from which great things were expected. The drawback to the latter lay in that as surely as we managed to fill it with a happy conglomeration of glowing log-butts, hot stones, and bottles filled with superheated sand, it would be kicked over in the night to the accompaniment of agonies and yelpings and many blisters and a prodigal waste of words.

The bother of sleeping with a dog, however, is that when you subconsciously attempt to pull up the blankets that slip down feetward during the night, you cannot move them on account of the animal having planted himself in their folds down there. The position was rather complicated and aggravated by our having one common top blanket, an odd blanket over and above the allowance of each, a blanket in which we both agreed to take a mutual share. Whoever woke up, chilled to the bone — not an infrequent occurrence, lying on frozen ground and in a temperature of a dozen and a half degrees of frost — naturally accused the other man of having taken his share of the common blanket. Sometimes he had; sometimes, finding it loose, Jack had tugged it away for his own special comfort, down by our feet; sometimes the common blanket got hopelessly tangled with the rest. On the whole, the common blanket was a confounded nuisance. We do not recommend common blankets for use in the Siberian camp.

Jack's individuality blossomed and put forth fresh green leaves during the journey down the Shilka. After having received a mild whipping for stealing meat, he passed the rest of that day in pensive reveries. The next morning we found that he had not wasted his time.

As he had already begun to take a morbid interest in the contents of the sack of provisions, watching, with bulging eyes and watering mouth, the production of sausages and tongues and ham and delectable what-nots from their unpromising exteriors, we had decided to keep him in continual view. If we let him out of our sight for a few moments, he was sure to be found sniffing around the sacks with superabundant interest and eagerness. When he barked, however, we would let him out of the shelter, to see what the matter was. If it was a false alarm, he would trot right back to us and snuggle down again on our blankets.

Well, the day after his meat stealing, he began to detect an astonishing lot of suspicious sounds. Without a moment's warning he would leap up and run out, barking lustily. And instead of coming straight back, he took to being longer and longer. By peeping through the flaps of our shelter we found that these false alarms were deliberate deceit. Once outside, he would bark for a few moments, and then, after turning an eye back in our direction to make sure that he was not under observation, he would noiselessly slide over to the provision sacks and investigate, head and forelegs and most of his body inside one of them. Presently we surprised him in this undignified attitude. He emerged and gave a sheepish, bewildered glance, as one who would say, "Now I wonder how I happened to find myself in there of all places!" But henceforth there was a remarkable diminution in the number of enemies and wild beasts to which Jack felt constrained to go out and give battle. We did not punish him: we only hoped he would not, of his own no inconsiderable intuition, discover how much he had gone up in our estimation. But he generously let the matter rest there.

Jack had strong likes and dislikes. He disapproved emphatically of our concertina. We bought it from a Chinaman at Stretensk, and had an optimistic theory that by dint of perseverance and application, we could become masters of this homely instrument before the end of the cruise. One of us met with early disillusionment and became a mere scoffer. The other affirmed that he had evolved two distinct and coherent tunes, indignantly denying that both might most aptly be described, in the euphonious phraseology of the insurance policies, as "acts of God."

At first Jack tried to be tolerant. He used to sing to the concertina. By no word or act would he let us gain the impression that, way in his cultured soul, he hated the strains of a concertina. He would throw back his head and yowl and yowl and yowl, with his nose tiptilted to the evening skies. But it grew too much of a good thing, and Jack began to yowl less and bark at it more. Once or twice he actually flew at the instrument and tried to do it grievous bodily harm.

The end came swiftly. Returning from a long tramp over the mountains, undertaken to see how far ahead stretched the ice jam, Digby heard an initial blare and a sobbing concertinian intake of breath, and then arose a verse of —

"Wenn ich in deine Augensch,
So schwindet all mein Leid und Weh!
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,
So werd ich ganz und gar gesund."

But on the opening bar of the refrain came discord, a yelp and the sound of a scuffle. The next moment from under the flap of the shelter crept Jack, the concertina gripped firmly in his jaws, and pursued by maledictions. He bolted up the hill into the bushes.

All that day was he absent. He returned as we were cooking supper, somewhat apprehensive now that the first fine fever of destruction had cooled in his veins, rather pinkish about the corners of the mouth, for the ill-fated instrument had been clothed in cherry-tinted bellows. He fetched us a wire spring in the morning, and we forgave him.

On the fifth day of this camp, more ice began to come down the river, and the water which had been rising and falling fitfully, rose a couple of feet. More and more broken ice hurried past; and then, next morning, came the main jam, the clearing of fifty miles of the upper waters of the river. We pulled the *Why Not?* on the bank. All afternoon, with the dull boom of distant surf on the seashore, the ice ground by.

That night the river sank, sank lower than at any time that week. When we woke the water was almost clear, a swift stream that bore a little broken mush on the surface, swirling down on either side of the oily waters of the mid-stream bar, where lodged a long line of high-piled mounds of ground-ice.

A few minutes after dawn, however, the waters heaved uneasily up and down the bank. Immediately they began to rise. In three hours they had risen nearly five feet, and the surface crept over the roof poles of our rapidly dismantled tent. First the shore ice — great four foot thick slabs of solid, translucent glass — began to float off and draw into midstream. Then, in the course of less than an hour after dawn, the pack began to get ominously tight. Great chunks of ice were shoved ashore, along with shoulder-high masses of dripping riverbed sludge and pebbles. Soon afterward the Shilka was a solid jam of swiftly moving lumps of ice. There was a new note prevailing.

The door of an *etape*, or criminal stopping station

The *Why Not?* was roosting in the willows like a bird, yards of ice between her and the water

In place of the dull grinding and bumping of the previous evening, so suggestive of the surf boom on a storm-swept bank and the rattling back of the shingle, was an all-pervading rustle, the rustle of heavy rain. For the water was thick with mush — finely broken fragments from the large ice-cakes. But though muffled, the sound of the surf and the low thundering of prodigious underwater impacts rose faintly through the rustle. Every now and again, with a splash and a shaking aside of glittering cascades of water, a great cake of bottom ice, torn loose from its bed moorings, would burst up through the surface rush and, colliding with a lightly pinned passing mass, would rise slowly up and up. For a few moments the pair would grapple like two live things, each reared four feet in air with the sunshine flashing off its dripping sides. Then, with an awful splintering and rendering, the weaker would slide back to be sucked under the churning waters.

The ice did not all move at a uniform rate. Glancing across the river one saw half a dozen different speed channels — like the series of moving platforms at the St. Louis Exposition. A heavy pine trunk, pinned under a hillock of piled ice, would be carried down at ten miles an hour and pass a brother similarly situated, whose speed was only half as much. The two would interlock. A moment's terrific strain, and crack! a splintered section of a thirty-inch log would be flicked many feet into the air, or a wall of great chunks of ice — both trees unyielding — would climb up on a neighboring floe edge. Now a large building trestle; now a boat or a dugout, or the crushed husk of one; now an unbroken wedge of smooth surface ice bearing half a mile of the dirt-discolored sledge track to Blagowestchensk and Khabarovsk; now a big ash pile; bales of hay; a tangle of half a score of uprooted birch

trees would sweep by. And still the water rose steadily, at the rate of six inches in fifteen minutes. At breakfast time, a sergeant of the 16th Siberski garrison and a private looked us up, drank tea, smoked cigarettes, and helped us make the *Why Not?* more comfortable.

Well, to cut the recountal short, eleven A. M. saw the unhappy boat wedged between an unyielding willow stump and a slab of ice as big as a ballroom floor. The next movement inshore would have crushed her. We could do no more; and exhausted, lay down on the bank for a doze.

Awakening at two o'clock, we found a clear stream flowing between the three furlong distant banks, and the *Why Not?* roosting in the willows, like a bird, with many yards of air and up-flung shore ice between her bottom boards and the water. Six men were fetched from a neighboring village by a vague demand for help. We did not specify of what nature, leaving their curiosity to let them in for the work in hand. One brought a dog and a gun. With levers and *rouble* distribution and much gesticulation and a little labor, the boat was launched about five o'clock and we recommenced our voyage.

About sunset we put in at a squalid little village of log huts to replenish the larder. The shop to which a native guided us had neither sign nor window of goods. Half the shop proper was filled by a couple of wooden beds — the only bedsteads we saw in a Siberian village hut. Above one of them, from a stout spring screwed into a roof beam, hung a kind of scale pan. Invisible under a heap of dirty rags, a baby stirred and wailed in this curious cradle. It appeared to be the thing for customers to rock the pan up and down while their purchases were being prepared, a rather clever method of obtaining free soothing for one's infant.

The little shop was typical, in its repellent disorder,

of the small village store of Siberia. Quite a considerable stock of goods that would allow of neat display were tilted in untidy heaps in boxes and on shelves. A glass showcase on the counter held tapes, cotton, ribbons and stockings, the whole forming a tight, unseemly mess crammed in like a bolster flock. What food-stuffs there were, were cheap. Milk was two cents a pint, including the bottle, and bottles have some commercial value in Siberia. A rich creamy butter at eighteen cents a pound, and fresh-laid eggs at a cent each could be bought.

At dusk we reached a headland on the southeast bank, and landing, encamped for the night. To get ashore, we had to clamber up a crevice in the tottering rampart of flood relic shore ice, which threatened to topple over in the night and smash the boat. We dared not let the *Why Not?* far out into the stream, on account of the drift ice that was still coming down pretty thick. However, we took ashore all stores and hoped for the best.

Finding the remains of an old cattle pen, we soon rigged up a good blanket shelter, and, as plenty of dead birch wood lay about, we had a warm fire and a big pile of glowing ashes throughout the night.

An hour before sunrise we were up, and away we started directly after breakfast. The mist hung heavily over the river, lovely pink slants of sunshine cleaving it wherever a gap appeared in the eastern hills.

The sun rose higher and the mist dissolved. Two or three pairs of startled duck flew up, and now and then a flock of crows would rise jabbering from the cliffs of a small mountain on the left bank under which we steered.

Some *versts* on we came in sight of a cluster of log cabins, and, curiously enough, a grove of big trees stood by them.

We floated past in a perfect babel of cock-crowing, ac-

companied by the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep; a few *versts* beyond a turn in the river showed that again we were "bunkered." In a narrow rock gorge ahead the ice jam had packed tight. So there was nothing to do but make a landing in a little glen that nestled between steep birch-clad hills.

It was a pretty spot with long withered grass, banks of moss and clumps of tangled willow shrub, and a bubbling streamlet of melting snow careering down over the turf. Fortunately. from a utilitarian point of view, the ground was covered with litter of gray bleached chips from a lumbering base of many years ago, so we found an abundance of fuel.

We awoke on May morning to find an unpleasant state of affairs. As far as the eye could reach, up and down stream, stretched a tight ice jam. Another big drift had come down during the night. A bleak snowstorm blew along on the western wind soon after dawn. It was cold all that day, and, of course, we had the customary heavy night frost. The next day, however, was swelteringly hot, giving a thermometer reading of ninety-six degrees in the sun and seventy-one degrees in the shade. The big changes of temperature, rises and falls of eighty degrees during the twenty-four hours, were very trying.

We had a good opportunity during those days of waiting, to notice the remarkable freshness of the dead, low herbage in forest and glen. Instead of the tangle of rotting stalks that carpet our own countryside in early spring, Siberian plant life stands just as it stood on that day in early October when it was killed by a sudden frost and a heavy fall of snow settled softly above and around each erect spray of leaves and head of blossoms. Even the flowers, crisp and crumbling to the touch, remained just as they had been at their death seven months ago.

And very beautiful a hillside looks in the morning sunshine with its spotted wild arum and orchis leaves, sage, colts-foot, thistle, ragwort and willow-herb, all with their flower heads intact; the clusters of pale yellow bedstraw, beautiful clumps of a low pink flowering shrub, a species of larkspur, and a dozen kinds of feathery grass, ferns and a most delicate trailing plant of reddish brown suggestive of smilax.

Siberian hay, too, keeps wonderfully well preserved. In the Salaiyeer district there were bales of hay that, when desiccated, gave up quite a botanical collection, all the flowers in their natural colors, not in the least degree faded. There were pink and white clovers, thistles, tansy, vetches, daisies and a number of flowers native to the country.

One morning we climbed up a craggy hillside above the creek behind our camp and among the lichened bowlders found edelweiss, dozens of plants and dried flower heads of it. A man at Stretensk laughed when we told him. "Yes, every year you have your toll of deaths in the Alps and the Austrian Tyrol — foolhardy young men who lose their lives creeping about precipices for that poor little plant. In Siberia, the edelweiss crops up abundantly here and there in spots over which you could safely drive in a carriage. There are points even along the Trans-Siberian line where edelweiss grows on the slopes of the railroad cuttings."

In the forests behind us we found oak and elm, walnut and willow and maple, cedars, silver birches, wild apples and fir trees. The Shilka, like the Amur and Usurri valleys, is very luxuriantly foliaged.

During our expedition through the country we made special effort to become acquainted with the fauna of the less exploited regions, the ordinary, everyday little people

of steppe and forest that usually are noticed but casually if at all.

Taking into consideration the scarcity of humans and the limitless forests, birds were by no means plentiful. Crows of two or three species were most numerous, traveling about in great flocks. In some of the villages of the upper Amur they are remarkably tame. The perky house sparrow has made himself at home among the populated zones. Owls are not plentiful, though we were shown a number of stuffed specimens. A species of large falcon was very plentiful along the rocky wooded hills, but we did not come across any eagles or information about their proximity. Wagtails were quite numerous. Wild ducks were hardly scarce as we struck them in great flocks here on the Shilka. Soon after dawn, on the morning of April 20th, we have a record that the tapping of a woodpecker was heard among the birches on the bank, and a moment later she whizzed across our boat, too swiftly for one to catch her markings.

Titmice of four species were numerous, and the skylark and linnet were encountered. No robins were seen, but the bullfinch was very common. On one occasion, near Stretensk, we saw a heron, and later on, along the Amur, herons were plentiful. The partridge, we are told, is common in Siberia, though we never saw one. Quails were met with now and again: they were very tame and reluctant to take to the wing. Magpies were everywhere abundant. They were more in constant evidence than any bird but the crow. Cuckoos, too, were very plentiful and very tame. The capercailzie, we were assured, was plentiful nearly everywhere. It is held to be so tame and spiritless that sportsmen will not shoot it. In the evening four will roost on a low pine branch. You shoot three. They drop, and the fourth sits there stupidly and gazes

reproachfully at you. In this they are suggestive of the "fool hen" of our own Northwest.

We noticed three or four species of wild bee, all small species, but no wasps. Hornets are said to occur in Siberia, but the only specimens we saw were in the Ural Mountains, a hundred miles from the western Siberian frontier.

Turning to the animals, ermines and weasels are common in many suitable habitats. We were told that the Canadian beaver, too, is pretty common, but, in this instance, our informant's description of the beast was rather crude.

The lynx is fairly plentiful and widespread in distribution throughout Siberia, chiefly in forest regions. He is not feared by the peasants. The snow leopard occurs in the Altai, and, from all accounts, is not a pleasant acquaintance to make. Deer and elk are reported fairly plentiful though we did not encounter them. Great herds of the latter are believed to frequent the forests south of Taiga below Tomsk. Hares are plentiful, often occurring in thousands in a confined area, but you cannot rely on finding them wherever and whenever you want them for food. The rabbit is unknown. The Siberian peasant will not eat the hare as he considers it to be of the cat family and first cousin to the pussy of the domestic hearth. A species of wild cat is often met with in the forests.

The mountain sheep occurs in the Altai, two species, *Ovis Ammon* and *Ovis Poli*. *Ammon* is larger than the mountain sheep of the American Rockies. *Poli's* true habitat is Turkestan, but he makes his way eastward from that region. The ibex, too, occurs in the Altai. The yak is found in Siberia proper, south of Biisk. He wanders about in herds, looking very inoffensive and domesticated, whereas he is, in reality, a most savage brute.

The brown rat and the house mouse are newcomers, introduced recently in freight consignments over the Trans-Siberian Railroad. They crop up in most towns on the railroad zone, but have not yet become a nuisance. There are field mice of a number of varieties. And, of course, there is the terrible *Arctomys bobac,* the Siberian marmot, to which the death of 50,000 persons in the recent epidemic of pneumonic plague in Manchuria is attributed. *Bobac — tarbagans,* as the peasants call him — is prone to attacks of pneumonic plague, and coming out of his hole to die, was gathered up by careless fur traders and brought down on their autumnal trek to the haunts of man to foster and spread infection.

Looking at the reptilia, eight species of snake are believed to occur in Siberia. In spite of much vigilance, we ourselves never saw a single snake in the country though we found a dead *Columber* at Dairen in south Manchuria. Men who have lived and traveled in Siberia for the best part of their lives told us they recollected having seen only one or two snakes there. So it appears likely that snakes can scarcely be plentiful.

You have to be very careful in collecting snake data from men unversed in natural history. For instance, we were assured by one Siberian worthy, who shall be nameless, that a brute of a poisonous serpent frequented a certain region. We were duly sympathetic and inquired, as an afterthought, "How do you know it was poisonous?" We were told in reply that there could be no doubt of it. The serpent sat up on the tip of its tail and hissed in a most disconcerting manner!

In the Salaiyeer district poisonous snakes undoubtedly occur. Men who are bitten swell up and exhibit marked effects.

In southern Siberia snake exorcists exist and have a

great influence over the ignorant peasantry. In the case of a bite, the nearest exorcist is sent for post haste. He arrives and reads a spell over the victim. Generally, as in most cases of snake bite, the victim recovers. Then he pays a substantial honorarium to his saviour. If he dies, the exorcist explains that he must have been an especially bad lot marked by Providence for removal from his uncontaminated neighbors. The peasants do not appear to be the only superstitious patrons of snake exorcists. At the *Konski Zabot Savlovski,* Tombeark stated that the superintendent of the estate, the chief of the biggest stud farm in Siberia, and presumably an enlightened man, used to send for exorcists when horses were bitten.

An interesting serpent, the largest Siberian snake, *Columber Schrencki,* often frightens the wits out of the peasant of south Siberia. Schrencki is known to run to albino sports. This white snake, a big fellow several feet long, is called " The King of Snakes " by the natives. To catch his eye is to condemn oneself to death within a fortnight. Colonel Savlovski was once returning from a long hunting trip attended by a couple of Tunghiz tribesmen — nomad Mongols — when, without a moment's warning, both set spurs to their horses and galloped rapidly out of sight. They were both picked and brave huntsmen.

Three weeks later they came back to the Savlovski estate and expressed their condolence with the family that the gallant colonel should have come to so sad an end by running into H.R.H. Schrencki. They were disillusioned and the colonel himself told them to get rid of their fanciful legend. It was no use. They nodded significantly at each other, and explained how glad they were that this particular royalty had been blind!

During our journey we encountered many butterflies, among them the Swallowtail, the Painted Lady, Small

Tortoiseshell, Camberwell Beauty, large and small whites, many blues, the Small Heath, Orange Tip, Black-veined White, Brimstone and a species of Skipper.

The big wood ant was very local. We found many nests near Irkutsk, yet not one on the Shilka banks. There were many species of small ants, some quite minute.

But enough of the fauna; let us go back to the camp above the rock gorge. It seemed as though spring were never coming. May 4th and not an opening bud of larch; not a new spray of fern; scarcely a shoot of green stuff underfoot. Down below the dead grass, here and there, a scant showing of sprouting growth; up in the head of the glen, a few bronze leaves just beginning to unfold on the myrtle twigs. That was all the vegetable life that stirred. That, and a few tufts of purple dwarf ground sedge.

On the fifth day of our penning up in this camp, we awoke to find clear water up and down stream. For some thirty feet from both banks, however, were gigantic slabs and chunks of ice firmly imbedded in a mush of broken fragments. The water had fallen a few feet and left this barrier wedged along the shore. At the height of the flood, the *Why Not?* had been poled up to the mouth of the little stream of our glen. There she had ridden easily in three feet of water. Now she lay high and dry among the ice bowlders, twenty yards from and fifteen feet above the surface of the Shilka.

Getting her off took a day of exhausting work. The sun was very hot. The waters of the brook in which we had to labor were melted snow and just as unpleasant to stand in for hours at a stretch for all the heat ashore. Moreover the gulley through which the brook flowed was so narrow that levers could rarely be used, and when one used them, they snapped.

Inch by inch we hacked away obstructing rocks of ice till the shaft of the hatchet broke. Then we took to building a dam across the stream, a dam that leaked like a sieve and was swept away almost as fast as we could run it up. So we dammed and dammed and damned; mended and remended the hatchet, and levered and coaxed and pulled and shoved, tilted and rocked, lifted and generally worried the obstinate craft from nine in the morning till late in the afternoon with the happy result of seeing her afloat on the bosom of Mother Shilka a short half hour before sundown.

In ten minutes the camp was dismantled and packed aboard, and we were off downstream.

A few *versts* on, and we passed in the gloaming a noisy little village, resounding with crowings and barkings and bleatings. On the opposite bank, jagged black cliffs loomed sheer up from the water to a height of some 300 feet, returning every sharp sound from the village in two or three reverberating echoes. Then dusk came quickly down upon the river and the red eyes of scattered forest fires began to wink out from the hills above us.

We decided to put in and cook supper, a simple enough plan in theory. But we found both banks choked with a twenty foot bank of the scraped-off flank of the passing ice jam. The waters had lowered, and, increasing the strain on the uplifted fragments, the quiet of the evening air was broken by constant crashes, like volley rifle firing, of lumps of ice slipping down into the river.

At length we found a hazardous mooring, and after unloading the *Why Not?* — in view of a nocturnal swamping — we cooked our meal and passed the night on a little six foot ledge on the face of a cliff. In spite of the warmth of the day, we had the usual several degrees of biting frost. In the cold dawn we set off again.

Soon after our start, without the slightest warning, the waters alongside us in midstream swirled and parted. Up shot a giant cake of bottom ice as big as a wagon. It rose less than ten feet away, its waves frothing over our gunwale. The periodical bobbing up of these lumps of bottom ice, cumbersome, heavy cakes flying up to the surface like so many released corks, supplied plenty of live interest during the next couple of hours.

Then, just as the sun, a red ball, had climbed above the dense banks of mist swathing the hills, we came round a bend past the village of Feersova, into full view of our old friend, the enemy — the ice jam again. It stretched motionless as far as the eye could see.

We were in midstream and the current was running like a millrace. Around us, and thicker and thicker behind us, more great chunks of ice were speeding down, the forerunner of another jam that was hurrying in our rear. There was no pulling against the stream. For a bad couple of minutes it seemed impossible that we could get over to the shore before being cast against the churning spume-flecked jaws of the jam ahead, where we could readily see blocks of ice, the size of a grand piano, being sucked under in the mid-race.

Fortunately for us, ice does not jam across a river in a straight line; the blockage takes the form of a V, the apex seaward. We managed to make a contact midway down the V among the drift ice that ground faster and faster along the narrow channel.

There was no time to lose. At each bump of a new arrival a small floe of shore ice would come lose from the slight moorings which the night's frost had given it with its fellows, and go careering down to swirl about in the whirlpool at the apex, or be sucked under the surface of the main jam. We sprang out on a creaking floe, gathered

Chinese carts beside the river at Blagowestchensk

The start of the ride to Ookteechenskaia

up our more valuable belongings, tossed some blankets over our shoulders, and made a bee-line for *terra firma* 150 yards ahead. Between the big floes were patches of broken mush that we had no time to test. Twice we went up to the hip, and once Jack had to be dragged out of a hole *en route.*

A few minutes later we stood on the water front of Feersova and watched our landing floe break away, carrying with it the *Why Not?,* down into the vortex of the ice jam. For a moment she spun round and round like a cork. Then, with a big chunk of ice that had come down in her rear, she was sucked under and disappeared.

At Feersova, we agreed the situation would be simplicity itself. A *tarantass,* a native springless carriage, would be chartered and we would continue our journey down the post road to Blagowestchensk. The hitch came in the discovery that there was no *tarantass* or carriage in the village. The wretched Feersovans were utterly apathetic. They had no carriage or cart, they explained, and there was an end of the matter. We and our baggage might rot in our tracks for all they cared.

We made a house to house visitation, explaining our woes, brandishing *rouble* notes and demanding, now with the gentleness of the dove, now with blood-curdling threats, objurgations, conjurations, and imprecations, some sort of assistance in getting out of the village.

Finally we found a grown, almost intelligent peasant who explained that the nearest post station was some twenty-five *versts* down the river, that only with difficulty could it be reached on horseback, and that the little river steamers would not be running for a fortnight or three weeks. He found us three horses and a young man with energy to come with us as guide.

So we rode across country for five or six hours, a switch-

back, pathless course, through woods and across streams, up and down hare-tracks on craggy ravines, to the little village of Ookteechenskaia. Here in the post station we got some sleep after the continuous labors of the past thirty-five hours.

Chapter XI

THE SIBERIAN VILLAGE AND THE VILLAGERS

OOKTEECHENSKAIA was but a tiny village — a row of log huts sprawling for a mile along the river front, a schoolhouse, a blue-domed church with a crazy fence, and a post station. Beyond it stretched the village fields, and on the hilltop above lay the graveyard with its scattering of three-armed crosses and its little pent-house sheltering an ikon of the Mother and her Child. In this out-of-the-way corner we lived for several days, subsisting on such rations as the natives could spare. The food, for a matter of fact, consisted of an egg a day, chunks of coarse rye bread, a very thin cabbage soup, and tea.

It was spring with you in America and daisies whitened the fields. With us it was still winter, and the lands were unplowed and the Shilka locked in an ice jam from shore to shore.

Each day the post rider with his saddle-bags of mail stopped and changed horses at the *postantia,* told the gossip of the river hamlets, and then passed on. Of other wayfarers there was none. We were the first foreigners to have honored the village with a stay.

There were not many amusements in Ookteechenskaia, and we had to make our own fun. Each afternoon we gathered the kiddies in our room at the post house and gave them toys — distorting mirrors, electric pocket lights, and stars painted with phosphorous that glowed in the

dark corners beneath the table. On the second day they brought their big brothers and sisters, their fathers and their mothers. Some even brought their grandparents. Then our room was filled with a gaping, oh-ohing crowd of cow-faced natives to whom electricity was an unknown marvel, and who, when we told them that New York had many buildings over twenty stories high and that we really do not have dust storms on Broadway, spat on the floor and declared to one another that we were mad. But while we were teaching the Ookteechenskaians, the Ookteechenskaians taught us many things, not the least of which was how to pronounce the name of their town, and how the Siberian village or *Mir* is constituted.

For the former all one needs is a long, deep breath and patience. Of the latter, it must be understood that the Siberian village is the type of Siberian life to-day.

Siberia, the northern half of Asia, is at present primarily an agricultural country. It harbors no upper classes outside the few high officials, governors, well-born officers in garrison, who live in a handful of large towns. There are absolutely no residents in the rural districts drawn from what one is accustomed to call the upper class. Again, there is practically no middle class. You find a sprinkling of them in towns — commercial agents, big shopkeepers, bank officials, and so forth, and, scattered at long intervals up and down country, are the doctors and their assistants the *velschers,* the mining engineers, mine managers and mine agents, the occasional schoolmaster and the banished *politicals* of education. There are next to no employers of labor, no prosperous farmers, no fruit growers or small capitalists interested in profitable rural industries.

Why?

Socialism is the answer. All the army of wranglers

Building in Siberia is done by socialistic companies, termed *artels*. The ground must first be blessed by a priest of the Greek church

about socialism, the pros and the antis, scattered around the seven seas, are too busy over their theoretical arguments and theses, apparently, to be aware of the fact that the population of one-half of the globe's five continents is to-day practicing and has been practicing for the past fifty years, an actual, workable kind of socialism.

When, away back in the '60s, Tsar Alexander II freed the serfs, he formed them into village communes or *Mirs,* each man being given a hut, a yard, and a share in the agricultural lands of the village.

The present ratio of distribution allows about 100 *decitima* (a *decitima* is equal to two-thirds of an acre of land, to a family, with five additional *decitima* for every man and male child. At the end of each fifteen years a new division is made to accommodate the families that have grown up. A certain amount is set aside for common pasturage. A peasant may rent land but not sell it.

The head of the *Mir* is the *Selski Starosta* or village elder who is the representative of law and order, the last of that great line of Russian officials which begins with the Tsar himself. The village elder is elected by the members of the *Mir.* He it is who visées your passport in the small town and to whom are brought village spats and the question of debts. According to the *Mir* constitution, the entire family is held responsible for the misdemeanors and liabilities of one of its members. Civil cases including sums up to 1,000 *roubles* are tried by a justice of the peace (*Merovi Sudie*) who sits at a county seat. There is a justice to each three or four counties.

As robbery without murder is exceptional rather than customary in rural communities, there is no law for petty offence, the natives settling it among themselves. The usual procedure is that followed the world over — a fight. And the Siberian peasant fights in a novel though some-

what Biblical manner. Instead of hurling themselves into a good, soul-satisfying fisticuff — the give and take of ordinary lands — the contestants stand and glare at each other like enraged beasts for a time, then one steps forward and smacks his rival on the cheek with the palm of his hand, the rival remaining stock-still with his arms to his side. Then the other man gets in his smack. That is all. There are no more blows. Mutual satisfaction has been gained. They part.

As an outcome of this socialistic system, the peasant has no master but the will of his compeers, and he would not work for wages were a capitalist farmer to come into the neighborhood and offer to employ him. He would rob that man but he would not work for him. Should he, by any chance, be ambitious enough to earn a little money working for wages, he must get the consent of his commune before he may sign himself. Thus the peasant has to bow to the will of his compeers in all matters concerning the tilling and sowing of the soil, and the reaping of harvests, and his income is that of his fellows. In the majority of cases, if a man wishes to follow enlightened farming methods, whether concerning an innovation in instruments, a new crop rotation, or a suggestion that exhausted lands be given a rest, he is taken before the almost invariably obstinate head man of the commune, lectured on the error of his ways, and sent back home an embittered and thenceforth nonchalant being. This very phase of *Mir* life was commented on by a butter merchant, a Dane, whom we met in Omsk. Many of the steppe farmers, though it is to their advantage to do so, refuse absolutely to use a separator for their milk, call them "devil machines" and are content to jog along as did their forefathers.

Instead of rising to a higher level of civilization, the

Siberian method of socialism — each man working not for himself but for the weal of the commune — gives abundant opportunity for the laziness that is apparent on all sides, and in a most emphatic manner is killing all enterprise and is pulling the better men down to a shockingly low level of slothful mediocrity.

This apathy is evidenced in the way the Siberian farmer tills his soil. Fundamentally, he is a poor husbandman. In many regions he is still content simply to scratch the ground with his rude *solsha* or harrow-plow rather than use modern machinery. He will not rotate his crops nor fertilize the ground. Manure he burns for fuel. He will grow three successive crops of the same kind on a plot and then let it lie idle for from five to ten years. Half the land is untilled in the neighborhood of villages, and when the crops fail on the land that is tilled, then famine comes.

The winter of 1910-11 saw suffering untold throughout Siberia, famine much more terrible than that of 1907. To be sure, the summer was very hot and drought killed the crops, but the peasant who lives from day to day had little laid up against it. In twenty eastern Russian and western Siberian provinces that have a total population of 36,000,000, 19,500,000 people were actually starving and in need of immediate State assistance. The crops of that year, not only of grain, but of fodder and hay, entirely failed in regions both sides of the Urals. Consequently cattle, horses, and household goods were sold at ruinous prices by the peasants at the very beginning of the fall and they were forced to satisfy the pangs of hunger with acorns, bran, weeds, ground bark of trees and in some known cases, even with clay. Mixed with a little flour these substitutes are turned into a heavy black paste called "bread." Sickness — hemorrhage and colic — are

the usual sequels of such food, but eventually scurvy and typhus follow in the wake of famine.

It appears from reports of that winter's famine that two and one-half cents were sufficient in famine districts to save one life from starvation for one day, and $4 for saving it till the next crop.

The Western mind naturally asks, "Why does not the farmer save a little money?" The answer of the Russian Government, whose care of the peasant is theoretically paternal, is that the farmer can save if he will permit the Government to lend a hand.

At the present time the Russian Government has nearly $40,000,000 of government moneys invested in the farmer's coöperative credit system. The peasant deposits his money with these credit societies and after his death his funeral expenses will be paid or the sums will be returned to him on the coming of age of his son or the marriage of his daughter.

The Government has two distinct aims in maintaining this credit system: (1) to educate the peasants along lines of modern farming; (2) to encourage them to save their earnings.

In the first case, for example: the Government, appreciating the possibilities of the butter producing section — there are about 160,000 square miles of this — the dairy products of which constitute one of Siberia's largest peasant outputs, has established dairy schools and is subsidizing them at a cool million of dollars each year. They are situated at the chief centers of the industry, at Kainsk, Omsk, Kourgan, Somernagorsk and Barnaoul. An *agronon,* or instructor of dairy farming, is in charge, and the peasant is given a three months' course in all subjects pertaining to the care and tilling of the soil, the modern methods of making butter, and the breeding of stock. The

Government offers gold medals for which the farmers can compete. This State interest has given the butter business great impetus. In 1896 there was but one dairy in all Siberia. To-day they number over 3,000 each with an output of from fifteen to thirty hundredweight of butter every week. These dairies are conducted usually by *artels* which makes the cost of hand labor low though the labor is concomitantly low in efficiency. Wages in Siberia are about one-tenth of those given in America. In the dairy districts, a workman gets about $1.75 a week for six days, working twelve hours a day.

The credit system was instituted in 1895 and now includes some 10,000 farmers' *artels.*

The Siberian village is ugly and squalid invariably. It has an unpleasant note of individuality that picks it out from the villages of any other country — the utter absence of shade, of trees. As matters stand, the village, especially on the banks of the big rivers, would often be quite presentable in summer had it those avenues of foliage, those big gnarled trees cropping up in odd corners that give so much of their charm to the villages of western Europe and America.

But the Siberian peasant will have none of them. If a tree manages to drag its dusty, parch-rooted self up to adolescence within the confines of the village, it is hacked down by a peasant. Nor is there any attempt whatever at outdoor gardening, individual gardening as we know and love it. There is the socialistic commercialized sharing of the market gardens situated on the outskirts of the village, and perhaps one log cabin in four boasts of half a dozen flowering shrubs and plants kept in tubs and old biscuit tins in the living-room during the winter. No one grows flowers out-of-doors or makes the slightest attempt to beautify the bare wooden walls of the home with

creepers or the yard with shrubs. Ivy is never seen outside a building, and is rare indeed in the forests.

Siberia with its fifty-two or so feast holidays in the year is in an uniquely favored position among the lands of the world to gain a reputation for gardening. Instead of sheer lazing about and *vodka* drunkenness to pass the time on feast days, the men might well use their spare days making their villages a pattern to civilization; but they seem to have little or no sense of esthetics. The state of their homes, the slipshod dressing of their women and children tell the same tale. Small wonder that the Japanese look upon them with such deep contempt, and consider the Russian peasantry in general as barbarians.

Until 1904 fines or short terms of imprisonment were imposed on those who persisted in working on holidays. These were abolished because the idleness they occasioned was a great drawback to the agricultural interests of the people, whole crops sometimes being spoiled by the refusal of the devout to work on a church holiday. From what we saw of holidays in the villages we were led to believe that the natives do not take advantage of the liberty allowed them. For, despite the new law, the holidays are still kept, and the *tracter* business thrives.

The Russian Government makes some effort to care for the intellectual and physical welfare of the next generation of peasants. Each village, even the smallest, has a *narodnija utchilistcha,* an elementary school where the three R's are taught. To each log schoolhouse is attached a playground, grassless, treeless and dusty, fitted with swings, giant strides, parallel bars and wooden horses. And that spot is by far the cheeriest spot in the village, for the children study and play with boisterousness unrestrained.

While only one town in a dozen boasts a doctor, each

The typical Siberian hut is low and substantially built of logs

has its *velscher,* a male nurse trained in simple *materia medica.* The doctor makes a continuous circuit of his villages, leaving the simpler cases to his assistant who is in residence. At points along the railroads and postal routes are small hospitals, a room with one cot — those we examined had the dirtiest bed linen — a row of bottles and drug packets, innumerable ikons, a picture of the Tsar taken when he was about nineteen, and a row of charity boxes.

Ordinarily the peasant is a very rugged and robust specimen, but when he falls ill his attitude is quite in line with his general apathy. If he feels the least touch of sickness he goes to bed and refuses to stir until his family routes him out or he dies. The neglect of disease among the natives of Siberia is appalling. A government statute prohibits the sale of patent medicines without a physician's order, so the native, too poor or too lazy to summon a doctor, succumbs to his disease.

It would be well, one thinks, if the Russian Government would devote some of the energy it now expends on jailing talkative university students to a serious study of the diseases that are scourging its people. Typhoid fever is prevalent in all Siberian towns. Water is taken, in the river villages, directly from the river. Possibly the fact that all Russians drink tea, which necessitates the boiling of the water, is what has preserved whole communities. Cholera is a regular summer visitant, though in the cities the authorities post up warnings to householders to drink no unboiled water nor eat uncooked fruit. In some places, as at Omsk, the melon market is closed during cholera scares. But even worse diseases are sapping the strength of the people. To pick out one example from many, one that is staggering: the leading physician at Omsk stated that eighty per cent. of the people in that city are syph-

ilitic, and that, in consequence, the insane asylums are overcrowded with unfortunates. Physicians in Irkutsk gave a rate for that city of not much lower percentage. In the gymnasium for girls at Blagowestchensk there were 700 pupils enrolled in 1911. Of those over fifteen years of age, thirty-five per cent. were suffering from the same disease. In many Tartar and Cossack villages, the prevalence is one hundred per cent.

Each village maintains a *zemstkaia kvatvra,* often a single room where travelers may put in for the night and get a *samovar* and black bread. The cuisine at these houses will never gain a world-wide reputation for variety or pleasurable palatability. The furniture of the room is crude, usually one table, a bench or two, and some chairs. The decorations are hideous chromos and still more hideous family photographs, and we found with singular regularity the table ornamented with a stack of empty beer bottles. The traveler furnishes his own bedding and sleeps on the floor.

Beside the *zemstkaia kvatvra* there is maintained by the Government along rural post roads *postantia,* post houses, where a guest room is reserved. The keeper issues tickets for a nominal sum that cover the price of horses or *tarantass* and a guide to the next post house. The *postantia* affords a floor to sleep on and hot water. You provide the blankets and the tea. The guest room is kept comparatively clean and the floor of broad pine boards proves a refreshing bed after ten hours in the saddle.

While traveling through Siberia one often meets wandering bands of carpenters — *artels* they are called — sometimes a dozen men with their saws and axes on their backs. They are an outgrowth of the socialistic atmosphere, and, to hark back to the original theme, the best development it has taken. They have no master. While

the *artel* will not guarantee the efficiency of its individual member, it holds itself responsible for his honesty. This is due to the fact that remuneration is shared equally. Should you want a house built, you call in an *artel,* and, without having to bicker and contract with a small army of plumbers, masons, roofers and nondescript hodcarriers, as in countries more advanced in civilization, the *artel* takes the entire matter out of your hands. When you pay, you pay the *artel.*

The *artel* system, however, is not confined to carpenters. The *artelschik* can be found in offices, on the streets, in the factories, shops and railroad stations, and on the farms. Even the convict settlements have their *artels* who look after the interests of the penal community and arrange for the purchase of its necessities.

The low efficiency of the Siberian laborer is not the fault of the Russian Government. He is inherently lazy. Were the Government less kind to her children, they might, in time, develop stamina enough to make a self-supporting people. As compared to the immigrant settlers in our own West or in Canada, the Siberian peasant is a pitiful specimen of humanity — nearer beast than man.

Like mankind the world over, he is essentially gregarious. He will not live out in the country but must cluster in the town. He may have to ride miles to and from his fields each day, but nothing will induce him to erect his hut out there on the plains and to fight for existence, as have thousands of settlers in other lands, against the elements and the loneliness of steppe life. Often the peasant is too lazy to ride out to his farm for days at a stretch. The fields, of course, suffer from want of his attention and he, in winter, from want of their productivity.

The peasant respects two persons, the Tsar and God.

The former he is obliged to respect, or else he will be jailed as a *political.* He must likewise give him three years of his youth to serve in the army. But the ordinary private — and we encountered him under many conditions, favorable and otherwise — does not command much respect. Like the soldiers of many lands, he pilfers; he is slovenly in the care of his uniform; and he snatches at the least graft that comes his way. In the last instance he is hardly to be blamed. His officers do it, and besides, the private's pay is so ridiculously small that he must get money somewhere. Think of it! The soldier of the Little Father is given seventy-five *kopecks* a month, thirty-six cents in our money! Out of this he must find shoe blacking and repairs to his uniform. And the seventy-five *kopecks* are given him in weekly instalments of about nine cents in our money, to prevent drunkenness!

The return of the soldier from his term of service is the link the Siberian village off the railroad has with civilization and the outside world. Following a policy calculated to deter local uprisings, the army authorities have adopted the old Roman military scheme of moving a man thousands of miles away from his home town. Thus Polish soldiers are scattered throughout Siberia and *vice versa.*

One such came home while we were at Ookteechenskaia. He was a strapping youth with an incipient moustache and an English vocabulary that was limited to "all right" and "damn." There was a general scurry among the women of the town and the show of Sunday frocks proved that even in Ookteechenskaia, the female heart loves brass buttons. That night the entire village gathered in to hear the experiences of the soldier. The older men who had served their time compared notes and sighed over

the fact that the good old days of the army were passed. There was much *vodka* and the showing of many photographs, for the Russian soldier has a fatal weakness for being photographed in his uniform; then the youth's sword was hung up on the wall of the room near the ikon corner, the little sanctuary that is found in each house however humble. There it will hang until the Little Father calls on him for help.

All men who have served their time in the army are enrolled in the reservists. They can be summoned back to the ranks at twenty-four hours' notice. In time of war or of war scares, the reservist is not allowed to leave his village. During the altercation with China over the Mongolian border in the spring of 1911, we found the reservists sitting in their huts awaiting the order to join a regiment. Incidentally, many of them took this enforced holiday with no good will. As one peasant expressed it, "I've been to one war. I fought the Japanese, and I'll not go to another." Yet this man wore the Cross of St. George for valor in the trenches along the Yalu!

The relation of the priest in the small town to the people is much akin to that which prevails the world over. The *pope,* as he is known to the Russians, mingles with his flock, accepting their hospitality with quaint condescension, and taking his perquisites, it must be lamented, with an almost greedy hand. We saw much of these priests both in the towns and the villages. Their long blue cassocks, their unshorn hair falling down to the shoulder, and their beards give them an eminently paternal appearance. At a distance they reminded one of the pictures of the Man of Galilee; yet, on approach, we found them very greasy and very ignorant. They know little more than their liturgy and the simple articles of faith. This, perhaps, is well, for their flocks are simple folk trusting

the church without the exercise of their intellects, a necessary confidence because the average peasant has little intellect to exercise. The priest has many perquisites in the Greek church. He must be present at births and deaths and must receive payment for his services. In some towns, it is rumored, the priest grows fat on his perquisites, but that is not the average state of affairs.

We saw the village priest in a picturesque light at Feersova. It was the morning we landed on the bank before the little Shilka town and watched our tiny craft, the *Why Not?,* crushed in the ice jams. As related before, we expected to take a *tarantass* from the village and continue our journey down the Amur post road but were unable to find one in the town. The fact of the matter was, our landing at Feersova attracted little attention. We wondered at this because the manner of our arrival was somewhat out of the ordinary and, moreover, strangers and above all foreigners, which we obviously were, are not often seen in the town. However, the mystery was soon explained. We made house to house visitations and finally came to a large log cabin where, it seemed, most of the village had foregathered. In one of the rooms were crowded the men. They welcomed us effusively, offering *vodka* and confections. Among them was a young cleric in his blue cassock. A cross hung on his breast, and in his hand was a glass of *scnapps.* First the refreshments were offered to him, then to us and the rest of the men. It was very pleasant indeed, but *vodka* and sweet cakes were not what we wanted most at that moment. We wanted a *tarantass,* horses — anything to convey us down the Amur pike to Blagowestchensk. We rose to go. The natives would not listen to it. We must stay for the fun. After several more rounds of *vodka* and cakes, the *pope* carefully brushed the crumbs

off the front of his cassock and stood up. Everyone else stood up. He went into an adjoining room. We followed. And there we found the cause of the feast. Surrounded by candles and praying women, lay the body of a peasant. In the old man's hand was a cross and a slip of paper. The latter, the natives explained, was his passport to St. Nicholas, for one must have a passport in death as well as in life according to the Russian. A service in the little church followed, then the body was borne up to the hilltop and laid away. A group of men formed a rude choir and intoned the responses to the priest, the women, meantime, standing respectfully behind them. During the entire service the body was uncovered. It was uncovered on the way to the grave. It was uncovered when the earth was crumbled over it. The burial finished, the natives trooped back to the village for more *vodka*. Now, from the start to the finish of this solemn service, we did not see a single tear shed.

What we saw at Feersova was only a small reproduction of what we had seen many times at Irkutsk. The Russians like large funerals. The body is hauled on a hearse that would do honor to a king, the horses led by men in white and the pallbearers marching beside the body with unlit candles in their hands.

Once in Irkutsk we were walking down the Bolshskaia quite unconcerned when we noticed that the pedestrians ahead of us were stepping out into the street, the men removing their hats, and making way for a little group to pass. In front of the group walked two little girls with wreaths of paper flowers. They both seemed very happy. Following them came two women in gaudy dresses, and then a man bearing under his arm a tiny coffin. Like the rest of Russian coffins, it had no lid, and the infant's body that lay within was exposed to the gaze

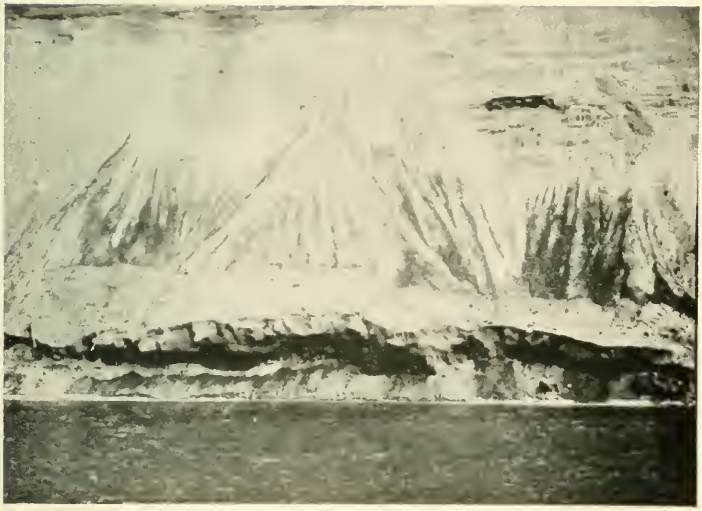
of the passerby. The procession was finished by the mother and the father, neither of them sorry looking — both, in fact, laughing and chattering.

Somehow our experiences with the Russian funeral and the Russian priest proved a rebuke to our ultra-modern ideas. The peasant trusts his spiritual father and smiles at death. Possibly he is right.

From the foregoing, it must not be inferred that all the Siberian peasants are members of the Greek Church. Religious freedom had always been permitted in Siberia, and consequently a significant percentage of the population is made up of dissenters — *Raskolinks,* they are called. They include the *Staravers,* or old believers in the original dogma of the Greek Church before the reforms of the Seventeenth Century; the *Mullakons* whose lives are marked for their simplicity and are like our Quakers; the *Doukhobors,* and the Baptists. These people came out in the early days of Siberia's colonization and have thrived in the new land. We found that these sectants are not looked upon with favor by the orthodox Greek churchman. On the Shilka-Blagowestchensk boat there was an altercation one day between the mate and the engineer. The latter, having delivered himself of many purple oaths, finally topped off his expression of wrath by the worst name he could think of. He curled his fist under the mate's nose and hissed *"Mullakon!"*

But the *Mullakons,* as we discovered in Amurland, are not to be discounted. The purity and earnestness of their lives stand out in rebuking contrast to the lives of the orthodox peasantry. The latter is devout. At all events, he observes each religious holiday — goes to church and gets drunk. This blind devotion is nothing exceptional. One finds it in many countries of the globe.

The wooded banks of the Amur



Along the Amur above Blagowestchensk

But the drunkenness holds a story that is far from pleasant.

Travelers in the kingdom of the Little Father often wonder at the prevalence of armless, legless beggars to be seen on all sides from Vilna to Vladivostok. Where disease is not responsible, drink is. The peasant goes to the *tracter* or wine shop, tosses off a bottle of *vodka,* and then, after a time, turns homeward. The night is cold. The way is dark. He is very sleepy, so he drops by the road. In the morning, when he is found, if he is not frozen to death, part of him is. Nor will the peasant thank you if at that time you extend to him the Samaritan hand. In Tomsk we found a man half frozen in a pool not far from the door of a *tracter.* We knew that arrests for drunkenness were rare in Siberia and that as this was a side street there might be no passerby except ourselves for some time. So we lifted him out and tried to succor him. When he awoke and was warm and sober, he cursed us for disturbing his rest!

The Siberian peasant — and we have stayed or lived in fourteen of his villages and had dealings with another score — is not hospitable. He, or rather his wife, will not dream of cooking any food especially for a well-paying guest. It needs a distinct effort to obtain boiled eggs; a plate of soup is more the exception than the rule. Butter and milk are frequently refused in a prosperous agricultural village, and there is no joint of meat. Though earning a fair sum each week, a family will eke out existence on bread and tea with an occasional treat of *pirouskies* or hashed meat balls. At a government post house you pay double the scheduled price for victuals and the man and his wife will grumble. In one instance — there is no space to detail more — a woman met us at the door with a saucer

we had used. It had an age-old crack. And she demanded money on the grounds that we had caused it!

The dominant note of the Siberian peasant is that of utter weariness. He seems to have something heavy and uncomfortable weighing him down, or better, something inside sapping his vitality, something which he himself cannot comprehend and which the casual observer might erroneously define as sheer laziness. Gorki speaks of it as "a spark wanting in his soul." Whether that spark is the desire to grow and better himself — a desire that will come only with decades of education — or the sense of freedom and the right to grow and better himself — which is the product only of a voice in one's own governing, the making and keeping of one's own laws — is hard to say. The peasant is the product of a system centuries old and he cannot be changed in a twinkling, for intelligence with him will not, of necessity, be a concomitant with education nor justice with liberty. At present he appears quite content. Abandoned completely to the animal forces of his instincts, he wants nothing more than a little food, a little clothing, *vodka* enough to make his head light, and the satisfaction of his lust. Ambition does not rouse him. Initiative is denied him. He is a member of the commune. He is just like the rest of the men in his *Mir*. He shrugs his shoulders — *Neitchevo!* — what does it matter?

Chapter XII

VOYAGING THROUGH AMURLAND [1]

WHEN you swing round the bend in the Shilka and catch the drift of the Argun, the junction of which forms the mighty river Amur, you begin to appreciate the symbolism of the position of Alexander III's statue at Irkutsk — he who looks hither with such intense gaze.

To this region the Government is directing the tide of immigration. The climate is less rigorous than that of central and southern Siberia and the sheltered valleys among the steep hills form excellent agricultural land. Moreover, Amurland and the maritime provinces touch Manchuria.

West of Baikal the steppe land and *taiga* are dreary; east is a country whose scenery is more diversified, whose people are imbued with modern ideas, and, in a measure, have a freer hand to live and do as they please. Amurland and the maritime regions showed marked traces of American influence and of that inimitable Far East cosmopolitanism. The people have a cheery slap-dash about them. In the cities, they seem to live, not barely exist;

[1] The voyage through Amurland and northern Manchuria was made by Mr. Wright. On the loss of the *Why Not?*, the authors were obliged, after a short stay at Ookteechenskaia, to return by horse over the Shilka Mountains to Stretensk. Mr. Digby, having a passport, went south by rail, while Mr. Wright, who had no passport, had virtually to "escape" from Russian territory via Manchuria.

and they hurry now and then. Little wonder that Siberia east of Baikal is called "Russian America."

Here east of Baikal is a region three times the size of Texas. In Trans-Baikalia are 229,520 square miles. Though much of this is mountain land, statistics give 85,000 square miles as arable. The Amur district is 172,826, with 40,000 square miles of it cultivable; and the maritime regions 712,585, with 63,000 square miles capable of supporting agriculture.

To the north of this region stretches the Government of Yakutsk, over a million and a half square miles in extent, most of it desolate country covered with timber, inhabited here and there by colonies of gold miners, nomadic tribes, and settlements of exiles. Yakutsk is a word that sends shivers through even a Siberian. The temperature falls often to forty degrees below in winter, and such summer as it has, is very short. Yakutsk to-day is what the Island of Saghalien was before the Russo-Japanese war, the place for the banishment of the worst criminals and of the most perverse political offenders.

The Shilka gets very shallow after the departure of the ice. A big, swiftly flowing river, a quarter of a mile wide, it frequently provides plenty of live interest to navigators of steamboats. From the moment we cleared the quay at Stretensk a sailor with a striped pole stood at our bow, continually sounding and singing out the readings.

Our little steamer, a post boat of the Government, prided itself on drawing only three and one-half feet of water, but as we had 165 third class human beings — "third class" was scarcely a misnomer — stowed away in our hold, she drew four feet.

The first day all went well until suppertime. We sat down with the cheery call of "Mark 8! Mark 8½!"

A glimpse of the Amur waterfront at Blagowestchensk

The square at Blagowestchensk, the most American town in Siberia

ringing in our ears. The Russian officers bound for far-away garrison posts, the German lads, the Blagowestchenskian advocate and his *chic* little wife, a Moscow merchant or two, a pair of sophomores from the University of St. Petersburg, all were drinking their tea in that happy Russian manner that reminds one of the sound of escaping steam in a factory.

The boat gave a lurch. The man in the bow screamed out "Tree!" (three). Then we struck, swung round in the current and heeled over.

Supper was abandoned. The cabinful of us rushed on deck while the crew tore up and down with much derangement of dignity and fluency of diction, and not the faintest idea of what they were doing. Presently a great timber lever was brought into play and they fetched the engine room staff up to assist. A prodigious strain — and the spar snapped. There were two more spars just as good. But instead of taking them, the economical crew launched a boat, recaptured the broken end of the first, brought out saws and hammers and nails and wire, and sat down to mend it on the spot. Meanwhile the fast-flowing Shilka was piling drift sand about our hull. Reversing the paddle-wheels only churned up the sand.

We returned to finish supper. Presently the engineer came into the saloon and announced that we were stuck firm and fast, and that he hadn't the ghost of an idea when we should manage to get off. Sixteen pairs of Russian shoulders shrugged; through sixteen mouths full of fish and bread and potatoes came the muffled murmur of "*Neitchevo!*" One good woman choked over her tea, but as she had done so twice at luncheon, it was more a case of *post hoc* than *propter hoc.*

At dawn we were towed off by a light draft barge, and on we went for several *versts,* always at a cautious twelve

knots an hour. Then at a huge stack of birch logs on the bank, we cast anchor and "coaled." The entire crew, armed with pairs of long poles, went ashore, and, using their poles stretcher-fashion, soon brought aboard a number of big piles of fuel. This operation had to be repeated at least twice every day. We were running heavy enough as it was, and could not risk losing six inches of draught by burdening ourselves with extra firewood. The second fueling usually took place at night by the light of bonfires. For three of the five nights from Stretensk to Blagowestchensk the bonfires were paled by the glow of the burning forest; whole sides of a mountain would be aflame and it was uncomfortably warm on the decks.

Forest fires are becoming a serious nuisance in Siberia. Often the *taiga* are cleared by merely firing them. In the better timbered region forest fires afford ample opportunity for graft. The forestry department gives a warden a large section to supervise. He must count the trees, classify them, cut avenues through to prevent the spread of fires, and lay corduroy roads. This entails the employment of many men. The usual plan, if the warden wishes to graft on his work, is to do only half of it, fire the rest, and send in falsified requisition slips for the wages of his men. We had opportunity for appreciating the fact of this graft when we went down the Shilka. We found respectable old men dismounting from their horses and firing the undergrowth for what to us at the time seemed the sheer fun of the thing.

"We know two kinds of fire," Mr. Sirota, the Blagowestchensk advocate said. "If a belt of forest is swept by a swift fire that leaps along the tops of the trees and merely consumes the foliage and chars the limbs, the matter will right itself before long. The wind that drove the fire will extinguish it before the trunks of the trees

and the peat below can get thoroughly ablaze. The serious Siberian forest fire is that which catches the slow burning bed of turf or pine needles below. Once the bed of a forest is well alight, the ignition will creep onward and onward for weeks, yielding to no rain and consuming every stick of timber and deep burrowing root it finds on the way.

"A year or two ago we had a bad forest fire on the banks of the Angarar near Baikal Lake. The smoke rose, and, drifting, hung like a mighty pall over hundreds of square miles of central Siberia. For over a month the sun was nothing more than a red ball glowing dully through the yellow haze."

Throughout the day my companions kept themselves busily employed. After the dishes were cleared from the cabin table, we sat around and carried on a genuine Pentacostal conversation. The professor and the Petersburg University students were reading proofs of a book on elementary geology, two German lads on their way to the Kundst and Albers store at Blagowestchensk were mightily homesick and talked all day of the Fatherland, the Moscow merchant perused month-old papers and "talked shop" to whomsoever of us he could buttonhole, the advocate and I spelled out Justinian from a tome he had picked up in Naples, while his charming little wife was reading the bizarre combination of French translations of Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis" and Sherlock Holmes.

There was an unusual sport that broke the monotony of the day, a sport that would have astonished those accustomed to traveling in well-populated river valleys. Duck used to swim ahead of the boat, apparently unconscious of our presence. Then those of us who had guns would line up on the forward deck, the captain would toot his whistle, and the gunners would blaze away at the

birds as they rose from the water. I do not recall having seen a single duck drop.

The Amur Valley is one of the great game and fauna centers of Siberia. The others are the lower northern slopes of the Altai — the gigantic range on the Siberio-Tibetan border, and the luxuriantly fertile Usurri province near the mouth of the Amur in the hills of the Pacific hitherland above Vladivostok. In all these districts, which have received a good deal of attention from sportsmen, the fauna is abnormal, not a bit typical of the real Siberia.

The tiger is in no danger of extinction yet awhile. The Siberian tiger is the finest in the world. Amurland and the Usurri are his home. He is quite plentiful up to a short distance from the city of Vladivostok. He preys on herds of small antelopes.

Some years ago there was a strong indication that the Usurri tiger was becoming obsessed by wanderlust; a marked westward movement toward Russia set in. One hardy pioneer, a grand old male tiger, actually penetrated into the southern end of Lake Baikal, nearly a thousand miles from his home. He was killed there, and numbers of stray tigers were found near the Manchurian frontier. But of late years none has been found outside the normal zone.

The Korean tiger, 300 miles south of the Siberian frontier on the border of Russian Manchuria, is becoming a serious menace. Numbers of people have recently been attacked and killed. A few weeks before our arrival in the neighborhood, a great man-eater actually broke into the house of an old resident in the village of Pairyangli, and, in spite of the efforts of a crowd of armed men outside, attacked and mauled the man and his son. And the beast is developing the ghastly habit of digging up

"Coaling" the boat on the Amur

A huge stack of birch logs supplied the fuel

corpses in graveyards. To quote one case, this May a tiger came down from the mountain jungles to the graveyard of Chinsimeon, and dug up and devoured the remains of a girl and two men.

The third day out from Stretensk we passed Komarsk, directly opposite the mouth of the Komara River. Here on a cliff stands a huge iron cross inscribed with the words of Baron Korft, once governor-general of the province: "Power lies not in force but in love." My companions pointed this out with great pride and told me it commemorated a congress held at Khabarovsk in 1886 to confer on the riparian rights of the Far East Russian provinces. This cross with its humane inscription, then, was standing at the time when General Gribski of Blagowestchensk drove the yellow inhabitants of his town into the Amur and succeeded in drowning about 5,000 of them!

Every here and there *en route* to Blagowestchensk we came to outcroppings of the Amur railroad now under construction. This line was authorized by the third Douma in 1907, but work on it had been very slow. When it is completed, new life will be brought to the regions beyond Stretensk, and a means of transportation will be assured that the present line of steamers cannot guarantee because of the continuous silting up of the Shilka and Amur. Thus Blagowestchensk will have a touch with civilization during the winter months. From October to late May, this city is practically cut off from the rest of the world. Caravans of camels go down the ice, but just before the rivers close and immediately after the ice breaks there are weeks when, except for the post road, Blagowestchensk has no means of communication with either Khabarovsk or Stretensk.

We saw some queer boats on that voyage from Stretensk. There was no standard shape or size. Each peasant

builder makes a boat after his own heart and conception. Most of them, perhaps, are along the lines of those sickle-shaped, sharp-ended prows in which the cannibals of the picture books come out to make things unpleasant for the marooned South Sea trading brigs. Dougout canoes, one piece hollowed tree trunks, too, are numerous — some so cunningly fashioned as to trim perfectly on being launched; others with slats of wood nailed on one side to preserve balance.

At Feersova we ran across an anomaly grafted on to an anachronism. Skipping over developments of a thousand years' boat-building, a worthy Siberian peasant had taken the earlist type, a heavy, one-piece, pine trunk canoe, and grafted on to it a pair of paddlewheels, one on each side, amidships. Each wheel revolved under a neat curved paddlebox, coated with tin, sides torn from shredded oil canisters. To propel her, you sat on a high seat, run across from gunwale to gunwale, grasped firmly in both hands a bend in the massive iron axle-bar connecting the paddle-wheels, and ground it round and round.

A larch trunk — most of the Shilka dugouts are of larch — has to be very old before it attains the requisite breadth. We counted the rings on an untrimmed butt of a new craft lying by the waterside at Lamavskaia, a canoe of typical size, and found her to be 272 years old. Her core had been stretching calmly up to the Siberian sky on a silent hillside in Trans-Baikalia while the Mayflower was still in commission!

The captain of our boat promised that Blagowestchensk would be reached in four days. The current was swift, and we all believed that he would be able to make good on this. But on the morning of the fifth day when he came to us with a petition stating that the lateness of the mails and of his arrival was due to no fault of his own,

but to the poor channel, and asked us to sign it, we knew that Blagowestchensk was not far off.

That noon, we turned a sharp curve in the river, rounded a high cliff, and there before us lay the city.

For municipal beautification, Blagowestchensk-on-Amur stands out among Siberian cities. It stretches several *versts* along the bank, a succession of parks, barracks, administrative buildings, schools, warehouses, Chinese cabins, mills, modern shops and pretty residences. Beneath the shade of avenues of trees it bustles — yes, this Siberian town actually bustles — with life and business.

There are two river fronts, one on the Amur and the other on the Zeya. The city lies in the angle of these two rivers. Along the Amur front runs a boulevard, tree-lined and wide, with here and there the garden of a residence sloping down to the water's edge. Blagowestchensk, as many have observed, is the most American town in Siberia.

Those who have lived there for many years, however, say that its record is none too clean, that it lacks both mercantile and moral integrity, and that it is, to a certain degree, like that city of Pennsylvania which is said to be "corrupt and contented." Gold is continually pouring in from the Salinga, Buria and Zeya fields. The government laboratory sent off 600 *poods* (21,600 pounds) last year, and the Siberski bank sent off even more.

Fortunes are made and lost in a night over gaming tables in this town. A mushroom aristocracy, spawning on a fortune of debts; a garrison of 8,000 troops, officered in many instances by men who have made Russia too hot to hold them; a colony of young German merchants, and a drift of miners, rich Chinese, coolies, and chansonettes lend Blagowestchensk a glamour that reflects Bret Harte. Blagowestchensk rivals Irkutsk in murder statistics; its

population is far less than that of the capital, yet it is a poor week that does not see five or six cold-blooded slaughters.

Suicides here, as in all Siberian cities, are prevalent. It is an odd fact that the Russian Easter holidays are popular with those bent on self-destruction. Blagowestchensk has had fifteen suicides each Easter Week for the past three years.

The schools are large and well equipped. Seven hundred girls attend the *gymnasium,* and a still larger number of boys their own school. An annex to the boys' building, a structure that would grace any American city, was opened two years ago. The city supports a public library, a museum, a theater and a club, a home for the aged, crippled and orphans, a medical society that maintains two dispensaries and a hospital for the poor.

A notable feature of the town is its shops. The city square is lined with large department stores. There is enough business to support four banks. The industries include two iron works, three saw mills, two soap factories, two rope works and nine flour mills. Over a million and a half *poods* of grain are exported every year from the city.

The population is 60,000, half of it Chinese, even after the house-cleaning of 1900, when, at the Governor's orders, the entire Celestial population was driven into the waters of the Amur, 5,000 drowned (even the authorities admit 4,500 drownings), and their goods confiscated by the citizens. Nor has the broom been laid aside for good, for only last winter all Jews were ordered out of town — many of them cultured and respectable people — and obliged to take up residence in Saghalin, a little Chinese town the other side of the river in Manchuria. Some of them now carry on contraband trade in *vodka* and alcohol.

Russian gunboats on the Amur. Russia patrols the northern Manchuria frontier with seventeen such vessels

Thus in a few months Saghalin has grown from a group of rude huts to a thriving city, one that bids fair not only to outrank its sister city, Aigun, forty *versts* eastward, but to rival Blagowestchensk in time.

There is coming to be a significant rivalry between the Chinese and Russian settlements on the Amur bank. Wherever the Chinese establish a settlement, the Russians start one with barracks on their Siberian shore. A whole crop of Russian barrack settlements sprang up last spring, many of them established to stop any attempt at landing parties of Chinese who were fleeing north from the dreadful plague around Kharbin.

In the case of Blagowestchensk and Aigun, the two chief Amurland *vis-à-vis,* Russia is taking a strong stand. Already she has never less than 8,000 troops in her city, and she is building barracks that will accommodate 40,000. Students of the Far East question might take note of this fact. The Chinese, by the way, have only 600 men over at Saghalin.

Little wonder that Colonel Ridatz, commander of the Cossack forces at Blagowestchensk, managed to commit a technical Russian invasion of the Chinese Empire recently, when, one glorious winter night, his men crossed the river and invested Saghalin. The incident, which happened during the three days Russia had given China to answer her ultimatum on the Mongolian border misunderstanding, never seemed to get to our ears at home. It bears recountal.

Colonel Ridatz, a boon companion of the Tsar, a man of many medals and even more sins against the Decalogue, got very drunk in Blagowestchensk one afternoon, and with a pair of companions crossed the frozen Amur and set out to paint Saghalin a deep vermilion, in spite of any objections that might be raised by the Chinese.

To summarize and Bowlderize, it appears that the three of them had a pretty lively and satisfying evening of mixed events. Then Ridatz said he had left his purse at home, and the fur began to fly. One Chinaman, incidentally, was killed and another had his arm cut off.

Late at night the news filtered into Blagowestchensk and reached the Cossack barracks. Now the Cossacks worshiped Ridatz and they did not like the notion of their beloved commander languishing, at that moment, in a locked room of a Chinese log hut. So several hundred of them, with their officers, scuttled off post haste, crossed the Amur, and gave the worthy citizens of Saghalin a phenomenally nerve-racking night. The next morning the acting governor of Blagowestchensk attempted to arrest Ridatz for his indiscretion, but Ridatz objected, and having the military at his back, held the best hand. In due time, the Colonel was transferred to a new post and there apparently the matter ended. Of course, it was easy enough to cook up sufficiently grave representations as to the conduct of the people of Saghalin to satisfy the Pekin authorities that they well deserved all they got.

However, Ridatz' little escapade is not to be taken as an everyday happening. Since a year ago when the late Premier Stolphin visited the farther regions of the Russian Empire and unearthed an appalling amount of graft and misconduct among officers and officials in general, there has been a constant watch kept on strangers who casually drop into a Siberian town. This fact was brought home to me by a little incident that might have proved serious. With two Russians, I had been dining in the park restaurant at Blagowestchensk, listening to the barrack's band play its three tunes over and over again, and casually observing a group of officers who, seated at a large table near by, appeared to have some occasion for a celebration

and were doing it with a consumption of liquors truly Rabelaisian. Among them was a tall, handsome fellow who tossed off his *vodka* like water and soon showed the effects. Wanderlust seized him. He must go round and visit with his neighbors. When he came to our table and caught a glimpse of my very un-Russian dress, he drew back aghast and then dropped on his knees before me. At first I could not make out what he was muttering, but finally I discovered that he took me for a spy sent out from the War Office in Petersburg to watch the conduct of officers. It was too good a joke to stop, so I told him I would make an exception of his case, that I would not report him, if he'd go back to his seat and behave himself. As he rose from his knees, I caught hold of his epaulette and marked that he was a captain of the Alexandrofski regiment. Very sheepishly he walked back to his companions and communicated the dreadful information that a "spotter" was in their midst. Their libations diminished appreciably.

Then the big fellow, having "sneaked in" several more *vodkas* when he thought I was not looking, was confronted with the idea that possibly he had made a mistake. So he sent a note over to one of my companions asking who and what I was. The answer read "An American newspaper man."

"*Americanski correspondent!*" Their table was in a roar. They had been brutally deceived. The penitent captain drew out his sword and challenged me to a duel on the spot! I showed him that I had nothing but a pocket knife. The crowd that collected acted as judges. The pocket knife was indeed too small; so I ordered my carriage and went home. Fortunately the next day I left Blagowestchensk.

There are two phases of the Russian officer. Here is

another with which I came in contact while on the river.

It happened in the dining saloon of the post boat from Stretensk. There were a number of ash trays on the table bearing pictures of Tolstoi and the improving aphorism that "the happiest life is that spent in the service of one's fellow men." An officer noticed one of these trays, called the waiter and sent for the steward. After having been questioned where he had procured the trays and why, the steward was sent out on the deck with them and ordered to fling them overboard.

I asked the officer if he objected to flicking his cigarette ashes on the face of Tolstoi. But he merely showed his teeth and uttered that one word dreaded of all Russians —"*Political.*" Beyond that he would not discuss the matter.

Though broad, the Amur river has shifting shoals and a treacherous channel. The little steamers moor up against the bank at night, not daring to navigate without daylight. Only four dredges work on the entire 3,000 miles of the river course, two near the mouth at Nikolaievsk and two by Blagowestchensk. Outside of government post boats, the river traffic is entirely in the hands of a combine of local merchants, which, controlled by no set tariff, demands as much as it can possibly get and monopolizes the entire transport business of Amurland's one feasible means of passage. There are few roads in Amurland, the great Siberian post road to the Pacific being merely a bridle track at best, and often shifting some miles this way or that through such circumstances as creeks being flooded or blocked with drift ice, or drought rendering a hillside so slippery that it cannot be climbed by horses. This old post road from Stretensk to Khabarovsk cost 15,000,000 *roubles* and was constructed for

A Chinese band in full swing at Tsitsitcar

military purposes. At present it is in a very poor state. We rode several days on it and found traveling far from easy. Often the bridges were poor, some of them had fallen to pieces, and, in many instances, the streams were not bridged at all.

Amurland is a spot Russia seems most anxious to colonize, since it is contiguous to northern Manchuria. Count Muraviev-Amurski first navigated a steamboat on the upped Amur in 1854. Shortly afterward immigrants were sent out. By 1860 there were 12,000 colonists on the Amur and sixty-one Cossack posts. Every day from Stretensk we passed barges laden with immigrants and their cattle. Each year sees a list of new villages placed on the map.

The farmers who have settled on the north bank of the river look enviously toward the Manchurian shore. The soil there, they claim, is richer. But one political move and they and their families and their American harvesting machinery will cross the river into Chinese territory.

Into this population of Amurland, both the old and the new, has grown a peculiar rebellion against the Orthodox Church. Fifty per cent. of the colonists are sectants — the Baptists, the *Mullakons* and the *Staravers,* or Old Believers.

The *Mullakons* absolutely control the mercantile situation. They own Blagowestchensk's nine flour mills and the combine that monopolizes the river transportation Living a Puritanic life — no drinking, no smoking, bed at eight and up at five, no churches, no holy ikons, no paid ministry, no ritual, no holidays and feast days — of the simple type of the Quaker, they present a marked contrast to the members of the Greek Church.

Their villages boast of the best schools and the most thrifty and well-to-do farmers. You can travel for days

together in Amurland and never see the three-armed gilt cross of Orthodoxy. This in spite of the fact that the Archbishop of Blagowestchensk parades the length and breadth of his diocese each year, and is thus well informed of the poor stand being made by his dogma. The Holy Synod, however, has decided to send out missionaries to convert the wayward flock.

At Blagowestchensk I made application for a guide and a band of Chinese soldiers to take me south through the mountains of the Hing Han Aigun region to Merguen and Tsitsitcar. My request was answered by a point-blank, "Can't you think of some more comfortable form of suicide?" The Hoong-Hooses had been particularly troublesome of late and no Russian would risk that route. Only a week or two before a little detachment of seven Russian soldiers had been cornered and murdered down the road, two days' march from the Amur.

Various accounts of the Hoong-Hooses were related to me in an offhand manner by my interpreter. I agreed with him that there were other ways of committing suicide. He gave me a list of their visitations to the neighborhood, concluding with an attack that had been made only a few days previous to my coming to Blagowestchensk. A great band of the brigands had descended upon the Amur village of Moho, opposite the Russian town called Ignasi near Blagowestchensk, and, capturing a number of Japanese merchants, they had demanded a ransom of 10,000 *roubles* ($5,000) for them.

My Chinese friend went on to explain that as I insisted on traveling south over the mountains of northern Manchuria, I would be obliged to follow the regular course prescribed by the brigands. I would be under the humiliating necessity of having to take with me a Hoong-Hoos intermediary, known to the general army of thieves, to

whom I would have to give a certain sum of money to lay out as he thought fit among the Hoong-Hooses who should come up to annoy the expedition. This was very un-American, he explained, but it saved time and trouble.

As I had no idea of contributing my wordly goods to Chinese brigands, nor my body to nourish the north Manchurian soil, I abandoned the trip overland to Merguen and Tsitsitcar.

So I was obliged to bribe the mate of a freight boat bound for Kharbin via the Soungari, for his bunk; and lest he should change his mind, I piled my goods aboard some hours before the time for sailing. We were to start at three o'clock, but official inspection of the boat by the navigation authorities and some tinkering up in the engine room, took all afternoon. We got away in the evening.

I was the sole passenger. The stern deck carried about a hundred coolies, who sprawled and slept their time away night and day, in the open air. No one spoke English, though a Chinese deckhand could count up to "*zehn*" in German. He was delighted when I taught him the English version. Every time he saw me on the deck he would grin and tick off "un, do, tree, foe" on his fingers.

That night we were boarded and examined by the first of the Chinese Imperial Customs officers in the person of a smartly uniformed Englishman. He examined the ship's papers and we steamed away from Aigun.

The second morning out we reached the junction of the Soungari River. In a few *versts* we should be out of Russian territory.

I looked forward to that moment. You see, I had had my passport stolen many weeks before on the station of Toula, a few hours' run east of Moscow. I had entered Siberia without a passport and had been going passport-

less ever since to the accompaniment of any amount of bother with the police.

The situation had been made even more serious by the refusal of the United States embassy at St. Petersburg to issue me an emergency passport. They refused on the technical ground of "lack of identification." This, despite the fact that I had visited the embassy, had presented my newspaper credentials, had asked that my route be registered with the proper Russian authorities in St. Petersburg, which was done, and despite the consoling presence among my papers at that very moment, of the card of the first secretary of the embassy. My Government having refused to assist me, I had, in reality, to "escape" from Russian territory.

There are only two ways of getting out of the great Russian Empire without a passport. One is by the Hoong-Hoos ridden overland route, which was impassable. This was my last chance, this river journey from Blagowestchensk to Kharbin. Were there any hitch ahead, any boarding of the Russian police to visé passports, I should be effectively trapped and compelled to sit down in the wilds here, twiddling my thumbs for weeks and months while embassies and the Department of State considered the case with their accustomed leisure, and dropped notes to Petersburg authorities stating that so far as they could ascertain I was not a bad sort of person on the whole, and it would be fairly safe to let me across the frontier. I assure you if you lose your passport in Russia, especially in the outlying regions, you are in for a staggering amount of bother and expense.

At its mouth, the Soungari is a couple of miles wide. Its waters are muddy and so swift that for miles after the junction with the clear stream of the Amur, they run a broad yellow ribbon side by side with the latter. The

Here and there along the Soungari Manchus boarded the steamer

hilly banks of the Amur left behind us, we wound through meadows and marshy and uncultivated land. A range of hills was on the horizon. They seemed to stay there in miniature eternally. We saw not a hut, not a human being. Now and then we surprised a group of hawks or crows, that fished on the muddy foreshore as we came round a bend in the course. Islands were as plentiful as on the Amur — low, marshy, willow-covered shoals of mud. There were no wood stacks for two days. The outlook was utterly monotonous. We stopped each night, as usual, anchoring as the last gray streaks left the sky, and starting again with the first promise of dawn.

I was somewhat disappointed when we turned into the Soungari that my passportless condition would not permit of further travel in Amurland. I should like to have gone all the way to Nikolaievsk, and thence south again to Khabarovsk and to Vladivostok.

The administrative capital of Amurland is Khabarovsk, a town of 17,000 people that stands on the heights near the junction of the Amur and Usurri rivers. Half the population is Chinese and Korean. Laboring for a ridiculously low wage, these natives take all the work that might be done by low class Russians. Khabarovsk, has, like its sister cities, a park, theater, club, and a triumphal arch. One encounters these arches throughout Siberia. They are relics of the visit paid to the country in 1891 by the present Tsar, then Tsarevitch. Few that we saw were in repair, most were falling to bits, and the traveler, rather than run the risk of having half a ton of bricks or a heavy timber tumble on his head, cautiously avoids going underneath them, and makes a wide detour.

Khabarovsk is the center of a great military population, and together with Vladivostok forms the basis of the Maritime military movements.

Three hundred miles north from Khabarovsk on the Amur at the point where the river empties into the Pacific, stands Nikolaievsk; three hundred miles south is Vladivostok, "Queen of the East." Vladivostok was settled by traders a hundred years ago. To-day it has a population of 80,000. Built on the slopes of several hills, Vladivostok overlooks the Golden Horn, or Novik Bay, a magnificent landlocked harbor large enough to shelter any navy in the world. Though ice-bound from December to March, this port serves for the traffic east of Baikal, and since the fall of Port Arthur, is the Pacific outlet for the Russian.

Vladivostok is a fortress, as many unlucky travelers who have tried to take photographs in it have discovered. The budget for the fortifications alone amounts to $150,000,000. There is a permanent garrison of 20,000 men, all arms of the service. The largest barracks is on Russian Island in the bay. This bit of land has a hill 1,000 feet high that has been capped with an ironstone fort. Several thirteen inch disappearing guns are set here. Two dynamite trenches are sunk in the saddle of the hill and four stores trenches. The construction of these is being finished by Russian and Chinese laborers; no Japanese are permitted on Russian Island. These trenches are sixty-five feet long and sixteen high, covered with a two foot wall of reënforced concrete, and are connected with the shore of Novik Bay by short railroads. In the harbor are stationed permanently two cruisers and a flotilla of six torpedo boats.

For twenty-eight miles up the finger of land on which Vladivostok is situated are scattered, in the shoulders of the hills, fortifications armed with thirteen inch disappearing guns. There are fortifications with like armament on the shore of Amur Bay across from Vladivostok.

The position and heavy arming of this port is significant when one considers that Japan is only thirty-six hours away.

My good friend the engineer of the *Caesar,* gave me his word of honor that we would reach Kharbin in five days. Five days had gone now and we were still in the wilderness, smacking mosquitoes and smoking Chinese cigarettes. And the mosquitoes on the Soungari, as in other parts of Siberia and Manchuria, are a terrible pest. In summer the cowherds near the *taiga* and on the steppes go about with great bags of black muslin over their heads and arms. Mosquitoes are especially bad on parts of the Amur shore, in the Usurri valley around Khabarovsk and on the Ket banks north of Krasnoiarsk. It is on authentic record that in the Fourteenth Century after the Japanese had taken Korea and trekked north, their hosts had to turn back from the Usurri district on account of the dreadful swarms of mosquitoes that they there encountered.

Five days we had gone and had got only as far as Sun Sing. This little Chinese port lies under the shoulder of a hill, a hill that I watched for two days on the sky line. It is topped with a large wooden cross, marking the grave of some Russian missionaries who clashed with a band of enthusiastic anti-Christian Chinese — clashed and were killed. There was another cheery Englishman in charge of the customs at Sun Sing; he sent me away with an armful of novels and a bottle of Scotch, very welcome gifts.

Then again the slow drive of the big stern paddlewheel and the regular succession of Russian meals prepared by a Chinese cook. Beyond Sun Sing there was some attempt at apiculture. A little bee farm had been established on a raised ridge of the marsh. We began to pass boats, some of them very odd. One in particular I shall

never forget. A native was propelling it by a squatting on the seat amidships and working a couple of sticks in the manner of a cripple in an invalid chair.

We gradually came to towns along the Soungari; there were Chinese troops here and there having their field practices. On the seventh day out from Blagowestchensk we sighted across the flats the housetops of Kharbin, and, passing under the great eight-span girder bridge, a Russian soldier with fixed bayonet on each span, we moored off the end of the Kitaiskaia.

Chapter XIII

THE PAGEANT OF TSITSITCAR

LEAVING the Moscow-Vladivostok railroad at Angangki, after sixteen hours' journey into Manchuria, I turned my traps over to a couple of Chinese and followed them across the sandy plain to the *Kitaiski vogsaal,* the Chinese station for the light railway up to Tsitsitcar. And in that brief half mile walk I passed as distinctly out of Russia into China as though a magic carpet had borne me in a moment of time from the Nevski Prospekt to the Inner Palace of Pekin. Russia was gone!

The little Chinese station was run by the Chinese for the Chinese. The porters were Chinese. The buildings were Chinese. A Chinaman served out tickets, and I waited five Chinese hours — which is eight — in a Chinese tea-den near by, where I fed upon Chinese viands and drank of Chinese drinks and proved quite the popular ethnological exhibit with the inhabitants of the neighboring mud hovels.

Jack's dog ticket, by the way, was so imposing an affair — a strip of paper eighteen inches by four, and full of odd Chinese chat — that on my return journey I wished to preserve some as trophies.

There was a hitch about those extra dog tickets. I had offered the money for four and counted out four on my fingers. Perhaps the presence of four dogs in a single compartment of the toyshop light-railed train would not

be tolerated, I thought. Perhaps it was merely to gratify his idle curiosity by seeing what manner of man was this who traveled around Manchuria with a perambulating kennel, that the ticket agent came out of his retreat. He spied Jack and delivered an excited harangue. It then struck me that he wanted to see the other three dogs. This, of course, was unfortunate, because *non erant* — they were not!

At length, by dint of violent gesticulations doorward indicative of strong canine reserves tethered without, I prevailed. The Celestial dipped his brush in a saucer of ink, took a stack of rice paper streamers, and proceeded to paint tickets. Reappearing, he took my four dog fares, and, with a bland smile, handed me a single strip.

I explained matters to a grave bystander of superior mien and said that I had paid for four tickets and received but one.

"*Kalasho! Cheteeli,*" he said, pointing to a sprawling character that looked like the tracks of a hobble-skirted spider. It was all in order, he said; the man had made out a pass for four dogs! And it took about ten minutes of very plain speaking to get rid of the puzzled but persevering Chinese conductor in the pale blue skirt who came around on the train and wanted to know what had happened to my other three dogs.

But to return to Angangki.

After eight hours, in clattered the toyshop train. Out of one of the single first class compartments tumbled a stern old Manchu trader who packed on to a wooden bullock cart much baggage — a baby with lips and cheeks rouged a bright and hideous pink, his pretty little wife in blue and pink clothing spangled with snakes and iridescent flowers; and a big blue gramophone horn.

The one miniature German engine that represents the

entire locomotive stock of the Tsitsitcar Railway System had arrived dead-beat after its thirty mile journey. It had to be side-tracked and fed with water and willow logs and coal dust, and then petted and coaxed with oil cans and monkey wrenches for another hour.

Aboard the train we carried three armed guards, in addition to the gentleman in the blue skirt who collected tickets. For the authorities, ever ready to overlook youth's exuberant excesses within reason, have recently become annoyed at the number of holdups on that thirty mile line, and are beginning to take elementary steps to discourage the nuisance. So the three armed guards, big loose-limbed Chinese, with unbraided flowing locks falling around their necks, sat on the alert, swinging their feet over the edge of the platform, each with a glittering, business-like automatic rifle across his knees and two full leather cartridge cases buckled to the front of his belt.

It was an odd run up to Tsitsitcar. One might have been in lower Jersey. Green meadows showed, and pretty villages nestling in their groves of trees, a welcome sight after the eternal bare white birch and gnarled pine left behind in Siberia. Brick and neat clay-walled villages, instead of the logs and timber. Here and there a naked sandhill. Many broad, brackish pools, shallow and rimmed with salt. Duck flurrying up from the sedge beds and willow-scrub, a heron lazily flapping away to the horizon.

The Russian residents, a handful, had fled from Tsitsitcar. The Russo-Asiatic Bank stood shuttered up and deserted. Pneumonic plague; and Governor-General Jow Shoo Mo had not yet given the assurance that it had left town, which was to bring the bank staff back from headquarters in Kharbin.

If you ever happen to find yourself in Tsitsitcar, you

can do worse than put up at the native hostelry of Ta Sin Shan. There is no Russian hotel or lodging in the town. Through an archway tunnel in the thick mud wall, you enter a big courtyard, flanked on every side by a row of one story fragile buildings, their fronts merely paper-covered wooden lattice work. Pull open a door, and you find yourself in a little hall with a wash basin and a chest. To the left and to the right open doors into rooms about ten feet by fifteen. One of these is your room. Rooms do not communicate. You and your fellow guest across the passage have your own front door in the common hall. Servants drop in now and again from the kitchen on the other side of the courtyard.

Your room is lit by two small oblong panes of glass let into the paper lattice facing the courtyard. It has no shelves or closets, but three clothes hooks are on the wall. Walls and ceiling are distempered white. A tarnished mirror and an atrocious ornamental (*sic*) clock of the kind that Germany makes to sell to the heathen, hang on one wall. On the table stand a big pair of china vases and another horrible clock. There is a third clock over on a stand by the window. None of them goes. Turning your back on the window, you face a platform covered with a thick felt rug, that occupies the far third of the room.

It was rather an uncanny sensation at first, strolling about the streets of Tsitsitcar among thousands of Chinese with never a European in sight. There are no modern institutions. The dusty streets, the thronged bazaars, the mud-walled houses, the odd ways of doing things, removed the place so utterly from the Occident. One seemed to be in a new world, not merely in a new country.

I attracted a lot of notice. Children ran screaming from my path, just as our apprehensive babies at home

A Chinese exponent of "the simple life" near Tsitsitcar

The Tsitsitcar barber shaves his patrons in the street

clear out from the path of a real live pigtailed Chinaman — but a "foreign devil" must be much more of an infant menace than a mere yellowish man with an amiable expression and a queue!

I did not like the looks of the people to begin with. The first morning I met 4,002 men who looked as though they would have cut my throat on the spot for the sum of ten cents, and then refunded to my executors eight cents in stamps as conscience money for an excess charge.

That is the fault of the western nations in associating the Chinese chiefly with romantic crime. Wherever, on Mott Street, New York, in Limehouse, London, or in the sundry back streets on the hill of Montmartre, two or three good inoffensive Chinese households gather together and pass their hard-won evening's leisure with a game of cards, a chat or a smoke, we thumbmark that spot as an opium den, a haunt of infamy, a gambling joint, a congregation of thugs and murderers, or a rendezvous of dauntless kidnapers. A virtuous Chinese to the respectable American with a New England conscience is a contradiction in terms.

The Chinese are a chattering, bright, vivacious people, laughing and smiling, breaking into song, joking and petting children and dogs, and taking their bird cages out to the park on holidays. They carve and sculpture and paint their signposts and town gates and roof gables. They make their places of worship spots of rare beauty. They'll have none of your little corrugated iron Bethels behind rows of iron spikes. Their temples are pitched in lovely groves, spots redolent with the scent of flowers, the music of birds, cool breezes and the gentle shimmer of checkered sunbeams slanting down through gaps in billowy avenues of foilage to ancient gray stone pathways.

I watched some mischievous boys clamber up the steep

stone steps before a temple doorway, and, while the old priest slumbered in his chair, tug at the bell rope. In a Christian country, the infuriated incumbent would have promptly risen up in his wrath, cuffed the nearest lad, and, that evening, called upon the parents of all and sundry with stern accusations and demands for prompt punishment. But this being only a Buddhist temple grove in faraway heathen China, the old priest woke up with a start and smiled and shook his finger roguishly at the giggling knot of little fellows scuttling down the broad weather-worn stone steps. A moment later he had them all up by his side exploiting with glee the contents of a cabinet of queer temple accessories.

Two sounds used to wake me early each morning; the cries of hucksters and the expiring shriek of pigs. The streets were full of hucksters, men with a couple of baskets of grain or vegetables slung up at either end of a long pole balanced on the shoulder. The *genius loci* of Tsitsitcar is the wail of the dying pig. The town seems to kill pigs incessantly day and night.

Leaving the gates of Ta Sin Shan's hostelry one morning, I cannoned into a barber, twanging a big tuning fork and crying out attractive quotations for shaving and hair-braiding. The barbers have an elaborate outfit — a stool for the customer, a stove, a brass bowl and quantities of combs and odd triangular razors and loose, homemade scissors. They work in the open street. You buttonhole a passing barber, and down goes his stool. You seat yourself while he stirs up the charcoal stove, mixes some powders and gives the brass bowl the barber's courtesy whisk with a cloth. Whereupon you are shampooed on the spot.

A couple of pilgrims passed, soliciting alms. They knelt before every disengaged shopkeeper in the bazaar,

bowing their foreheads till they touched the dust. Sometimes the shopkeeper ran forward and raised them bodily, but the etiquette in general was to take a few paces forward and beckon them up with a kindly gesture. I watched a dozen of these prostrations and never saw a coin pass hands. There was only that affectionate rush to lift the pilgrim, like a family Bible woodcut of the return of the Prodigal Son. One wished that, at about the fifth of these affecting but unlucrative demonstrations, the pilgrims would resort to sarcasm, but they merely looked hot and thirsty and annoyed as they brushed each successive powdering of dust from their brows.

Round the corner into the thronged bazaar came His Exalted Excellency, Governor-General Jow Shoo Mo of the Province of Tsitsitcar, a power in the north of the Chinese Empire, who is entitled to wear the coveted red glass ball on the peak of his white lamp-shade hat, whose displeasure can spell summary death to any one of some hundred thousand men. On ahead traveled a smart little Chinese soldier in khaki and puttees, followed by two native mounted police in dark blue canvas, their queues flying behind in the breeze. A four-wheeled hack appeared, a squat American four-wheeler, changed only by a pair of blue enamel panels and a big glass window in the rear, and bright nickel-plated rods for the two barefootmen to cling to. Drawn by a couple of unmatched little horses, this hybrid state equipage swept swiftly by, giving one a glimpse of a stern, erect figure within, scarlet tassels and a peacock feather dangling from his conical white hat. A mounted soldier brought up the rear.

But if Jow passes swiftly, his passing is far from silent. In fact, he is quite the "big noise" both literally and metaphorically. For there is a loud bell under the state four-wheeler of Tsitsitcar, a bell rung by the foot-

man in the rear. This is constantly being clanged, partly to inform the police of His Excellency's whereabouts in the labyrinth of narrow, high-walled streets; nominally in case of a hostile demonstration, but chiefly, one suspects, to show what a really august person is His Excellency Governor-General Jow. He dashes about town with the clamor of a fire engine.

The shops of Tsitsitcar are open-fronted. Over sun-flooded benches of wares your glance travels back into dim elusive interiors, small wooden-latticed windows throwing glittering pencils of light on the scraps of rich red and blue, gilt and green carvings, or over the stacks of curious earthenware and vessels of burnished brass, pencils of light that only emphasize the gloom where, by their glowing braziers, squat old men smoking pipes.

Quite a number of shops in Tsitsitcar specialize in books and shoes, books at one counter, shoes at another, each pair neatly done up in white paper. And there are many street stalls that sell duck eggs and cigarettes, just duck eggs and cigarettes and nothing more. The cigarettes come from England and are sold in cartons lettered in English. It is a happy thought of the manufacturers — or, perhaps, it is a still happier coincidence — that the most popular brand is called "Pirates," "Pirates" in this metropolis of the Hoong-Hooses!

At one of the booths in the main bazaar of Tsitsitcar they sell strips of shining brown, glutinous, ribbon seaweed. At another sat a pair of letter writers. They sat on tall chairs under a red oilskin sunshade, surrounded by tables and stands and sticks of ink, pen-brushes, stationery and reference books, gazed on with awe by the illiterate poor. Over there squats a cobbler with his gear spread out in the dust. The cobblers of Tsitsitcar, like the letter-writers,

the barbers, the doctors and pretty much everyone else, work in the open street.

The doctors work in teams of two. They rig up a tent furnished with chairs and a counter spread with bushels of trash — love potions, charms, incantations, neck ornaments to scare away devils, potato bugs and the plague — a dozen dirty little bottles of simple medicaments, glycerine, iodine, spirits of nitre, stuff in common demand in the drug store. Pinned to the side of the tent are gruesome colored native anatomical charts.

Up comes a patient. The doctor pushes him into a chair and then and there hears his tale of woe or dresses his wound or does anything that has to be done, all of it without the least privacy. The patients return a stolid glare to the gaping crowd around and do not seem to object to them in the slightest degree. The bigger the crowd, the more delighted the doctor, naturally. I had not the fortune to come in at a leg amputation but I was favored with the sight of several exceedingly insanitary and painful operations being summarily performed in a haze of whirling dust.

There are plenty of undertakers in Tsitsitcar, doing business in spacious shops piled with huge, gayly painted coffins — usually vermilion. A Manchurian undertaker's is quite a cheery place. There are the great red and blue coffins ornamented with gold and black in bold designs. There are shelves and stacks of graveyard gear, like circus properties — little low carts for pulling children along in the procession, candles, shrines, fireworks, stacks of paper money, joss sticks, racks of bravely painted swords and spears and cudgels for the use of the dead.

If your purse is shallow, you needn't buy all these accessories. You can, with most of the poorer Chinese,

make your coffin at home during the long winter evenings, and just drop around into the undertaker's for a really high-class lid, something with painted stalks and water lilies and piles of fruit. One undertaker in the town has a sideline in fishmongery: rows of flayed and drying fish sway from lines of cord suspended from one towering pile of coffins to another.

The bazaar has many eating houses, open-fronted and full of stoves on which savory dishes are frying. The Occidental restaurant cook, perspiring over his glowing range throughout the hot summer months, would envy his brother *artiste* in Tsitsitcar. The Tsitsitcar stove is a neat, portable little affair. The cook gets a stout, shallow wicker basket and fills it with clay; builds up clay walls around the brim, and cements to the top an iron bowl. Each of the six or eight cooks has two or three of these stoves to tend, and places them practically wherever he likes. On cold days he retreats into the shelter of the shop. When it is warm, he comes out to the edge of the street and here passes the day in the fresh air.

The people of the city have a little park perched on a hill on the outskirts by the jail, the only path of greenery in the place. Only two or three acres in extent, it has a bijou ornamental lake, high-banked, tiny paths winding around the water's edge. Red legged cranes strut among the rushes, and there is a delightful high-peaked zigzag bridgelet tinted in reds and greens and blues with dragons at both approaches, dragons snorting fiery wooden flames from their nostrils.

Men have a pretty custom of taking their pet birds for an outing in the park as we would take our dogs. Every other native of the town has his sweet-throated nightingale. Early in the morning one encounters a long stream of young men, chattering boys and grave old graybeards,

Tsitsitcar babies are taken to funerals in little four-wheeled carts

Letter writers, with their sticks of ink and pen brushes, are the wonder of the illiterate

each with his spacious, semi-circular bird cage, wending its way up the hill to the park. There they hang their cages on low willow branches and leave them amid the foliage till it is time to return.

Opposite the park is the jail. It is very dirty, very tumbledown, but rich in criminal lore. For here are confined the Hoong-Hooses condemned to death, and in the field behind the jail Tsitsitcar's far-famed gigantic executioner slashes off the heads of these offending brigands.

The Hoong-Hooses, the murderous brigands of Manchuria, constitute an element that must be taken into account while journeying through Amurland and Manchuria. They are a curious and sinister people. Their origin is veiled in obscurity. Probably they spring from an outlawed band of Chinese robbers, who, driven to the northern frontier of the Celestial Empire long ago, there made themselves at home. They are known to have been harassing the Manchus for at least a couple of centuries.

No one used to take much notice of the Hoong-Hooses until the Russian railroad came and the Tsar's ministers poured troops —"station guards"— into Manchuria for the avowed purpose of protecting the line. At that day the European man-in-the-street smiled and tapped his nose when you spoke of Hoong-Hooses. They were regarded as a purely mythical menace conjured up by Russia to placate the suspicious world powers.

The Hoong-Hooses, however, were and are to-day a very live reality. They have cost Russia hundreds of thousands of *roubles* in railway repairs and the lives of hundreds of men. During the Russo-Japanese War, you may recollect, the Japanese were shrewd enough to spend a lot of money upon employing them to attack commissariat trains and blow up bridges, and, according to contract, they succeeded in making themselves an abominable nuisance.

To this very day they menace Manchuria nearly as gravely as ever. The Russian railroad trains running south from Kharbin to Chang-Chun, the frontier of the Japanese sphere of influence, all carry, in case of attack, a couple of heavily armed Cossacks on every coach.

The Hoong-Hooses are well organized, and they fight after the manner of our American Indian. When the moment comes for them to deliver their blow, they are on the spot in their hundreds, well armed, splendidly mounted, resourceful and merciless. An idea of their armament can be gained from the statement made to us by an Irish contractor who came originally from New York City and who lived in a little village north of Vladivostok. He carried on a regular trade in firearms and ammunition with the Hoong-Hooses. Automatic pistols he sold for $75 apiece, and their cartridges for $5 a hundred.

When the mailed fist of retribution attempts to clutch the Hoong-Hooses, lo and behold! they have dissolved like sugar in a teacup, each man has gone his own way, an army vanished into thin air! Now and then the Hoong-Hooses will surround and attack a mine, murdering the manager and all the officers, and stealing everything of value that they can lay their hands upon. Generally, however, it is the Manchu farmer, a simple, inoffensive countryman, who is their victim. He is assessed by them and taxed up to the hilt. So long as he can pay, well and good. When he can't — a knife thrust or a bullet. The Hoong-Hooses have developed the practice of private inquiry agent to a fine art. Their spies are everywhere. There is hardly a farm in the length and breadth of Manchuria which does not unwittingly employ a man in league with the Hoong-Hooses. When farmer Chun Sin Po comes into a nice little legacy from his Uncle Wo, the Canton tea merchant, the news travels to the brigands,

and they are certain to call and demand half or three-quarters of it. They rarely kill if the goose will continue laying the golden egg.

In the case of a raid on Russian property, the owner goes to the Chinese governor of the district with his complaint. The governor, in due time, reports the matter to the police. The Chinese police hold it a point of honor to apprehend the culprit in spite of the fact that the position is somewhat complicated by half the Hoong-Hooses being deserters from the police force and the army. But though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. The Chinese police are passing lazy. So their usual course is to stroll into the jail where a large assortment of mixed and impecunious criminals is always on hand, pick out a man with a bad record, buy a couple of additional witnesses, and convict the unhappy wretch of the crime in question. If he has money enough to make good the prosecutor's loss and to bribe the police handsomely, he usually manages to escape. In the other event he is tortured for ten days or so till he can stand no more, and then put on one side until the next execution day.

Hoong-Hooses are executed in batches usually in the Field of Death here at Tsitsitcar in central Manchuria. Tsitsitcar is the center of their activities. They come in regularly with their makings and promptly deposit them with the Russo-Asiatic Bank here.

Execution Day at Tsitsitcar is a public holiday. Early in the morning everyone packs a lunch basket, takes his or her best sunshade and the bird cage, and starts away for the Field of Death. The Lord High Executioner, a gigantic and most unlovely person to look upon, superintends getting the wretches out of the rumbling, three-spoked bullock carts, arranges them in a kneeling posture with the light in the right way for any Russian officer

who may be standing by with his camera, and then, without any further delay, strolls around and slashes off their heads with his great sword.

The heads are taken to the Russian consulate, almost the only foreign dwelling in the big native city. The Russians have to inspect them to see that justice has been done — or injustice, as the case may be. After this the Chinese receive back the heads.

Now in the case of the execution of the ordinary criminal, the head and body are returned to the relatives of the dead man. They at once see about having them sewed together again before burial. But here the Government steps in. It would obviously lower the moral tone of Heaven, explains Pekin, to have the executed criminals strolling about like any gentleman, corrupting the innocent outlook of who knows how many guileless angels; yet we do not want to interfere with the enjoyment of Heaven by men who have expiated their crimes here below. So it is ordered that the heads of the executed criminals shall be sewn on the wrong way, facing backwards. Thus, in the world to come, men who have not been all they might have been may be recognized at sight and treated with a necessary tinge of hauteur by law-abiding citizens of Zion.

The Hoong-Hooses, however, have been making themselves such a nuisance that a dreadful punishment is visited upon them. Their heads are never returned to their relatives. The Chinese police put them in wicker baskets and hang them on trees along the country roads as a warning to prospective recruits to the ranks of the brigands. The significance of this measure is chiefly that in Heaven the Hoong-Hooses shall have no heads. Their bodies shall be walking with the elect, to satisfy humanitarian scruples, but they shall neither see, nor hear, nor

Bringing the Hoong-Hooses to judgment. Three views of execution day at Tsitsikar

smell, nor taste — in fact, shall have a rather dull time.

Naturally you ask, as we did a worthy Chinese at Dairen, what is the use of a Chinese Heaven if you get all the thugs and murderers participating in ethical bliss? A polite Chinese will change the conversation at this point and pretend he never heard the question. You see, it is rather embarrassing to explain to a man across the dinner table that Gehenna is especially reserved for foreigners!

The bodies of the executed Hoong-Hooses are tied up to posts or spread-eagled against fallen trees in the Field of Death for about a week, after which they may be taken away by anyone rash enough to report himself or herself a relative of the deceased.

I packed Jack, my traps and myself into a bullock cart and reached the station full early. All the Japanese colony of Tsitsitcar, some thirty men and women, came to see off two or three of their people who, from their mountainous stacks of luggage and steamer chairs, appeared to be going back to the old country. The women were all in their native costumes, but one girl stumbled about in high-heeled tan shoes topped by passionate purple stockings.

A woman was carrying on her back a little slant-eyed, black topknotted, chattering bundle in a rich red flowered kimono, an animated Japanese doll. Presently the mother lifted it down and for a moment left it to its own devices. It crossed the station to a tattered Chinese ragamuffin who lolled against a post, and dealt him a deliberate vindictive kick with its little wooden shoe. It probably had overheard some of its father's typical Japanese remarks about the Chinese. The mother ran over and remonstrated; and the father rebuked it, and, after the illogical manner of pious fathers in every clime, bought the baby a big

juicy pear. She took a bite. Then, seeing the parents engrossed in conversation once more, Baby toddled off and solemnly presented the pear to the astonished little Chinese boy. It was a pretty *entente*.

The costume of the Japanese men at the station that morning was original in the extreme. Each wore a mixture of native and English garments.

A wild clangor came down the breeze, and the great Governor-General Jow made his appearance, amid cringings and bowings and scrapings, to bid farewell to the departing Japanese merchants. The Japanese are a power in the land since their clean-cut occupation of Korea and southern Manchuria, and the potentates of northern China are prudently making themselves *personæ gratae*.

While the crowd respectfully formed an aisle, the tall governor, resplendent in gorgeous flowered silk and all the trinket trappings of his rank, strode up and down, chatting with a swarthy little Japanese trader at his side.

Now this is what the Japanese trader wore: a little tight-fitting check cloth cap of the kind that was fashionable at Atlantic City in the late '70s, a very dusty, rusty black frock coat, a native silk vest, a gaudy silk scarf of rainbow tints speckled with horseshoes, tight cycling knickerbockers, military puttees, and a pair of elastic-sided boots!

Chapter XIV

KHARBIN AFTER THE PLAGUE

"NIET . . . *Neitchevo niet!*" sang out the Russian officer whom we encountered at Kharbin this twenty-first day of May, 1911. "We've got it under at last!"

"We've got it under at last!" That is the joyous cry going up on every hand, the keynote of Kharbin today. The Angel of Death has spread its raven wings and flown away at last from the plague-stricken capital of northeast Asia.

The streets, the restaurants, the hotels, the markets are thronged with smiling crowds. Petersburg *artistes* are giving drama at the theater. A week or two back, Kharbin saw its first aeroplane flight. Trade is heavy. Money is plentiful. And a warm sun beats down from dawn to dusk on the spacious cobbled streets and the green mist of the spring foliage in the Preestan.

The Moskovski barracks, the dreaded plague hospital, has cremated the remains of its very last patient. For a while the Black Death clung to Mukden, down south, but the sunshine and the warm days of spring came to accomplish what the doctors were unable to effect, and now even Mukden, Dairen and Chie-Foo are free from plague.

"We know little or no more about the pneumonic plague than we did before," said Mr. Norman of the Russo-Asiatic

Bank here when talking to us this morning of Kharbin's recent ordeal.

"It is so uncertain in its infection. There was the case, for instance, of the medical student Mameltov. He came down to the station one afternoon to see off a party of relatives. He kissed them all good-by. That very evening he went down with plague and died the next day. They telegraphed up the line and had his relatives stopped and rigorously quarantined. It seemed certain, to those acquainted with the facts of the case, that all would die. Yet not one developed the malady.

"There was a population of 110,000 in Kharbin a few months ago — 30,000 Europeans, mostly Russians, and 80,000 Chinese. Great numbers of Chinese fled during the plague. It is estimated here that quite 10,000 Chinese perished, with many Europeans. Whole neighboring villages have been wiped out, have disappeared from the marshy plain along the banks of the Soungari.

"Much could have been done to quell the epidemic in its earlier stages had the Chinese only realized the gravity of the situation. But they would not. They treated it with levity, they laughed and joked about it."

"Why?"

"An odd reason. You know that the public sale of opium has recently been prohibited in the Chinese Empire. Of course, they still get it, but obtained surreptitiously, the cost is high and the quality poor.

"The Chinese, not only the ignorant coolies but middle class Chinese, men of common sense and some acumen, held and hold to-day that pneumonic plague is simply and solely a sort of sickness induced by their having been forced to smoke opium of indifferent quality. If you reason with them, they point out that whereas the class most hit by the high cost of good opium — the coolies, un-

The Manchurian porter is distinctly labeled

The Chinese carts at Tsitsitcar, though but two-wheeled, have great carrying capacity

skilled laborers — supplied ninety-five per cent. of the victims, very few native merchants and traders, men who can afford to pay a good price for their pipe fuel, were hit. But even the Chinese now realize the seriousness of the malady and the wisdom of paying attention to the precautions advised by doctors.

"Victims were stricken with frightful suddenness. Walking along the street, a man would suddenly feel unwell and collapse on the spot. If this happened in the daytime, of course the victim would be seen and taken off to the plague barracks at once. But we used to dread the sights that dawn would bring — here a man, there a woman, now a great cluster of huddled forms, seized during the night. The streets were like a battlefield.

"Isolation was our salvation. The Preestan, the native town across the railroad bridge including the port of Kharbin, the riverfront of the Soungari where the plague raged its fiercest, were divided into half a dozen districts, each being absolutely cut off from any communication whatsoever with its neighbor. By this means, sources of infection were far more readily traced, and household and street quarantine regulations could be praticed minutely.

"We European residents had not much fear for ourselves. It has been our experience that unless some of the saliva of a coughing plague-stricken person was received on the skin, there was little danger of infection. There was some apprehension, however, as to the part the currency might play in conveying germs, especially as the pockets of dead plague victims were robbed. Banks and even shops, at frequent intervals, subjected all Russian and native paper money to a stringent sterilization by super-heated steam, and coins were treated with sublimate.

"As to the European cases, many of these were doctors and medical students in actual contact with cases. Most

of the remainder were the lowest types of Russian and Chinese coolies, who, not content with the wage of $15 a week paid by the authorities to the men employed to clear away and burn corpses — not an unduly hazardous task, perhaps, when you consider that the doctors provided medicated face and hand wrappings and chemically treated gowns, and gave every advice tending to greater safety — threw precautions to the winds and rifled the pockets and clothing of the victims. Naturally, they paid the penalty. Great numbers of Chinese, too, threw away their lives by this mode of plunder.

"At the height of the epidemic, the ground was frozen iron hard and coffins could seldom be buried. Finally 150 grave-diggers dug a pit large enough to hold about 100 coffins, and the dead, both coffined and uncoffined, were thrown in and cremated."

The following vivid summary of events sent to London on March 8th by the *Times* correspondent, is of more than usual interest. It gives an idea of what the conditions really were.

"The first case of plague was discovered on November 8th. The first western-trained Chinese doctors arrived on December 6th, but were prevented from working. A fortnight later the director of the Army Medical College at Tientsin, Dr. Wu Lien-teh, a Cantonese from Singapore who had a brilliant career at Cambridge, arrived here with a number of assistants, only to encounter heart-breaking opposition. But then the Chinese governor of Kirin came here himself. A Cantonese himself, he had personal experience of the advantage of western medicine, for his own son had been treated by Dr. Lien-teh and had recovered from a severe attack of typhoid. The governor realized the importance of giving support to the doctors. . . . Soldiers were provided to form a cordon around the

infected town. Sanitary measures were devised, police and a corps of stretcher-bearers were organized, and system introduced. The Russian authorities supplied 100 railway cars for a quarantine station; an excellent arrangement, for they are easily aired and easily warmed. In these 1,200 'contacts' are living. The town was divided into four sections, the occupants of each section being distinguished by a different colored badge. Disinfecting stations and laboratories were created. There was daily house to house visitation. The cry 'Bring out your dead!' was heard as in the Plague of London.

"A few days after the departure of the governor, Dr. Stenhouse and Dr. Graham Aspland arrived from Pekin and the last named has remained on duty till to-day. Too much praise cannot be given to these English doctors for their courage and devotion, their skill and humanity. And all honor is also due to Dr. Wu Lien-teh who has borne the brunt of the work, has faced constant danger and has shown administrative gifts of a high order. He is the chief of the Chinese Sanitary Commission. His energy has been untiring, his good humor unfailing. With him have been twenty Chinese doctors trained in western medicine and nearly all speaking English; with him also have been thirty Chinese medical students and dressers. The experience they have gained will be invaluable in the future. Conspicuous on the staff was a young doctor, Dr. Chuan, whose experiences have included a two years' residence with the Chinese Amban in Tibet and a visit to Simla.

"Success attended organized effort. As I have said, plague declared itself on November 8, but it was not till after January 14, after the visit of the governor, that any effective measures could be instituted. The death roll reached its height on January 28 when there were 173

fatal cases. One month later, on February 28, no death was reported in the Chinese town.

"Infection was by direct contact. Rats and fleas played no part in the infection. The attack was fulminant, there was no authentic case of recovery. Old persons and young children fared better than the middle-aged. In one family, out of fourteen persons, there were only two survivors, a woman of seventy-one and her grandchild of two. Among all the bodies cremated there was only one child. Evidence as to the value of inoculation was inconclusive, but evidence is overwhelming that nearly every case of death among the Europeans was preventable, and there have been only fifty deaths among a European population in the infected areas of North Manchuria of not less than 60,000. Astonishing indifference was manifested in the face of danger.

"Fu Chia Tien, the Chinese town, when winter began, had a resident population of 25,000 and an additional floating population of some 10,000, the numbers being estimates only, and, if incorrect, err by excess. Of these, 5,138 have died from plague, a number insignificant when compared with the mortality of plague outbreaks in India.

"In the chief plague hospital, 1,600 plague patients were admitted, and 1,600 died. An aged Chinese quack of the old school, named Mr. Ku, assisted by one dresser, was in charge of the hospital. They cared for the dying, superintended the moving of the dead, incurred appalling risks, took no precautions, and yet enjoyed complete immunity.

"Many stories are told of the plague. In one shop a tailor had eight apprentices. Two of these died. Their bodies were hidden and no report made. Then four more were stricken and died, and their bodies also concealed.

This one ambulance carried 3,000 plague victims at Kharbin

A plague pit just before kerosene was pumped over the intermingled logs and corpses

But now the master was unnerved. He gathered together his money, collecting what debts he could, and with a hoard of 690 *roubles,* hurried off to the railway station, determined to flee from the city. But he had come from the infected district and the railroad would not issue him a ticket. In despair he returned to his shop, and three days later died. Two apprentices now survived. They divided his money and looked forward to the enjoyment of their gains and of the property. Escape, however, was denied them. Both died, and when the bearers came to search the house, they found the money equally shared sewn up in the clothing on their dead bodies."

To correct very prevalent misconceptions on the subject, it should be noted that, up to the moment of writing, pneumonic plague is absolutely fatal with a mortality of 100 per cent. Inoculation is of no avail.

The good done by the doctors has been entirely preventative and alleviative until death comes. They center their efforts upon the prompt removal of the suspects and contacts to hospitals where the poor victims cannot spread their malady and where they may be made as comfortable as possible and their not very great sufferings eased until the supervening of death, generally well within forty-eight hours of the time the first effects were felt.

All authorities agree that when a cure, or a partial cure, from pneumonic plague comes, it will be due simply and solely to experimentation with live animals. At the moment, Dr. Zaboltin has established himself at Kharbin with numbers of Chinese apes and guinea pigs from Japan, and with skilled aides is proceeding with a series of experiments that he is confident will result in a reliable serum with which to combat the next outbreak. Bubonic plague, it may be mentioned in passing, is a far less terrible malady. It does not attack Europeans nearly

so often as natives, and by serum treatment the proportion of one cure in three cases is effected.

The official Chinese governmental report, which is acknowledgedly optimistic, gives a total of 45,000 deaths in Manchuria and the northern fringe of China in this great epidemic. China spent — or more correctly, Pekin disbursed for the purpose — three million *taels* to combat plague. Russia was reprehensibly mean in her appropriations. Up to January 20th, up to the height of the outbreak, she had voted only $40,000. Japan's very first appropriation — and she had far less at stake in the infected area than Russia — was a cool half million dollars.

The interest of Kharbin as a city goes a good deal further than the dreadful circumstances of her recent plague. Few cities have a more interesting population.

Saturday night. Everyone is on the Kitaiskaia, China Street. Caucasians, handsome swashbucklers with pointed black beards and a swagger in their walk. In spite of the summer heat each wears an Astrakhan fez tilted rakishly over one ear, and the long plum-colored national coat with a dummy bullet belt slung across the breast. In the belt is a silver-handled dagger in a beautifully chased sheath. Numbers of women, women of the upper classes, well dressed and with pretty faces — a rare sight, indeed, in Asiatic Russia. Their poorer sisters, too, have not the slipshod air of the Siberian women, who always appeared to have robed themselves with the fire engine at the door. Nor do you see any women in peasant dress. They wear becoming scarfs of filmy black lace over their heads.

There are plenty of mounted police, Chinese and Russian soldiers with bayoneted rifles slung across their backs and big wooden revolver holsters at the hip. The little Russian school girls, in smart straw hats and a bunch of lilies-of-

the-valley tucked in their blouses, have come out to sit demurely on the benches along the broad plank pavements. A tall, bearded Sikh, with a bright pink turban, enormous buttonhole bouquet, cutaway frock coat, lavender gloves, brown shoes, silver-headed cane and other splendors, has drifted up from India. Students and schoolboys of innumerable sorts and sizes stroll about in their long brass-buttoned military coats and military peaked caps. Officers and soldiers of a dozen regiments and ranks you see — a continuous performance of saluting and acknowledging salutes.

A profusion of color prevails. Red-shirted Russians, girded with gleaming black belts are here, and gorgeous cabbies in brown Holland smocks, with scarlet scarfs around their waists. The Russian cabbie, you know, shows his tints well, for he is invariably very fat. The thin cabbies actually pad their breasts with cushions as a local precaution against possible taunts from their fellows to the effect that their masters do not give them enough to eat. Now and then a group of Germans, arm-in-arm, and chattering volubly, drifts by. There are men in dark blue military capes fastened with a smart silver clasp, men in Panamas, in the wide-brimmed Stetson, in snowy pith helmets, in flat English motoring caps.

You see Japanese, the men invariably in western dress and more often than not with gold-rimmed spectacles. Their women folk do not take so kindly to skirt and blouse. They wear their pretty native dress, and clatter along on their high-heeled wooden shoes, here and there one with a slant-eyed, gayly-clad, animated little doll of a Nippon baby packed up in the fold of the *obi* behind her shoulder.

And the Chinese, in their thousands, gliding here and there in the throng, noiseless in their cloth shoes. But never a Chinese woman, though a few hours' journey

south in Mukden the women are much in evidence. A very dirty and very picturesque old Chinaman pokes along, smoking his long pipe, hand in hand with a little Chinese boy robed in pale blue canvas and wearing a decrepit derby hat on the back of his head. When the Chinese of Kharbin want to pass a really satisfying evening, they get hold of a dusty, battered derby and parade the streets, wearing it with visible *éclat*. The Celestials, by the way, make a lot of Saturday evening, though most of them work, as usual, on Sunday. Rows and rows of them populate the stools in the open-fronted restaurants that do a heavy, if ill-smelling, trade.

A smart Russian *coiffeur* on the Kitaiskaia has just imported, to adorn his window, one of those fine wax ladies in low neck evening dress, a ravishing Marcel wave in her golden hair. She is making a terrific hit with the Chinese, the well-to-do merchant as much as the poor coolie. They have never seen anything like that before. They never suspect such resplendent transformations on the part of the "foreign devil" ladies. They cluster about, four deep around the window, and their faces are a study. It is one of the Chinese errand-boy jokes of Kharbin to flourish a dirty cap and make a low bow to her ladyship when he passes.

The Chinese are discovering a new profession — boot-blacking. It pays very well and the labor is *nil*. It suits them admirably. A coolie toils from dawn to dusk at heavy manual work for a wage of twelve cents a day: he can make five cents in ten minutes as a shoeblack. And, in consequence, shoeblacks swarm on every hand. From bundles of little carved sticks, like miniature sets of golf clubs, the operator exercises the minutest judgment in selecting just the one very toothpick to dislodge this or that particular speck of mud, and the various

The Government used all possible precautions in disposing of the bodies of pneumonic plague victims

cloths and brushes have each their strictly specialized function.

Soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, of half the races of the Occident and the Orient pass to and fro with gay laughter and chatter. Under the lovely purple evening sky of the East, diamond-powdered with scintillating stars, the concourse flows up and down the cobbled Kitaiskaia. It seems hard to believe that a very few short weeks ago this spot was the center of the most dreadful outbreak of pneumonic plague in the world's annals, the streets full of dead and dying, and the air foul with the drifting smoke of burning pits and a hundred smouldering houses, the only traffic that of the dead cart and the plague van.

Chapter XV

DOWN THE BACKBONE OF MANCHURIA

FROM Kharbin southward we ran all day through well-populated, fertile, agricultural lands, vast plowed fields speckled with village oases, pretty straw-thatched villages embowered in foliage and snugly tucked away inside encircling mud walls.

Graves everywhere; but that sinister word "grave" has a cheery ring in the ears of rural Manchuria. Ever since the beginning of things, when our ancestors, girded with hides, were roaming through the beast-ravaged forests, Manchuria has buried her dead simply and beautifully by laying them away under a big conical pile of stones and earth out on the parched countryside. They planted over their remains a seedling tree or two, seedlings that will grow up and up, each year affording a greater and greater bounty of midday shade to the exhausted workers in the fields, greater and greater as the poor human clay below crumbles faster and faster into dust. These are the only trees outside the villages. There are no woods and copses down the backbone of Manchuria. The graves are generally isolated, a group of two or five or eight cropping up here and there often out of sight of any human habitation.

Of late years agriculture has made great strides in Manchuria. Square miles of plowed grainland exist where, less than a score of years ago, were only acres. The bean is the principal crop; it and its by-product fur-

nish food, light, fodder, and fertilizer to the natives, and it, at present, constitutes Manchuria's chief article of export.

But though the fields are cultivated, the graves are never disturbed. The plow forges straight ahead to within a few feet; then it curves away. So, glancing across an open expanse of miles of undulating fields, you see cool green grass, gay swallowtail butterflies fluttering in the shadow of the waving elms and willows among the flowers and the burial cones.

The unhappy crows in this part of the country have nowhere to build. They do not take kindly to the lower trees among the fields; the Chinese are too fond of eggs. In one spot they have defied convention, precedent, and His Excellency, the Minister of Ways and Communications of All the Russians, by establishing a well-populated village of straggling twig nests in the skein of telegraph wires on the railroad embankment.

South of Kharbin you are still in a nominally peaceful region, but Manchurian China, with her Hoong-Hooses, is an uncertain pot on the hob and has an unpleasant trick of boiling over when one least expects it. So the Russian trackside guard houses, each with its handful of picked troops in garrison, are turned into very neat and serviceable forts, surrounded by high walls pierced with rifle slits and abutting in turreted bastions. The train, by the way, always carries military guards — a dozen strapping Cossacks from the garrison of Kharbin, armed with rifle, sabre and revolver.

In the dusk of the evening we came to the last little Russian station. On across the plain twinkled a blaze of bright lights: at that point, after the war, Japan amputated at the knee the leg on which Russia had taken her stand in southern Manchuria. Thus far may Im-

perial Russia run her trains and lord it over the natives, thus far and no farther. The track took a steep curve, and we rolled into Chang-Chun, one of the oldest and most picturesque railroad stations in the world.

The Russian train, lit only with flickering candles, pulls into a station flooded brilliantly with pink electric light shed by towering arc standards. Under the shadow of the platform roof the dusk is spangled with darting colored paper lanterns; every porter or tray hawker or railroad official carries his own gaudy Japanese paper lantern swaying at the tip of a short wand held in his hand. All about is a scurrying medley of Russians, Japanese and Chinese, and here and there an American, a Briton or a German overflowing with inquiries.

On the opposite track stands one of the fine trains of the South Manchurian Railway, brilliantly illuminated with electric light, modern Pullmans and beautifully upholstered sleeping coaches attached, a train almost indistinguishable from a modern American transcontinental limited. It is drawn by a powerful American locomotive with a tolling bell.

And above all things, you know a porter when you see one on the platforms of Chang-Chun. He is not one of those gorgeous, bebraided officials you take for a local chief of police, nor is he a tattered, shift-eyed coolie: most railroad porters in the East come under one or the other category. In nine-inch letters across the front of his blue canvas smock the Chinaman has PORTER — PORTER in good, clean, white, healthy, shouting English characters. He turns around and you get a back view. There it is again in letters nine inches high, PORTER. There is no deception about him. Wouldn't Ruskin have loved to have shaken him by the hand!

It was seven o'clock next morning when the train drew

into Mukden. We took breakfast at the "Yamato," the station hotel. Gone now was the railroad refreshment room of the Russians with its oilcloth table covers, its messes of pickles and salt fish, its impossible coffee, and its wretched service. In its unlamented stead, Yamato hotels — fine, modern, airy buildings, with their luxury running to coolness and comfort in the place of gaudy wall papers and tarnished gilt tossed about by the pailful. Cosy wicker basket chairs, fern-embowered lounges instead of the crimson plush sweepings of the fake furniture factories of Paris and Moscow, tattered and scarred by drunken orgies. A restful atmosphere until you get your bill and find its charges equal to those of the most fashionable of New York hotels.

Mukden, of course, played an important part in the Russo-Japanese War. At this spot the tide of battle turned seven times. It also figured with sad prominence in the recent epidemic of pneumonic plague. Kharbin and Mukden were the two worst plague centers. Kharbin traced 172 deaths in one day and had well over 100 a day for weeks at a time. Mukden had about thirty deaths a day during her worst three weeks.

We at home sometimes wonder how a sphere of influence works, how the Japanese or Russians can maintain the whip hand of Manchuria while it is still a province of China populated by Manchus and Chinese and governed by a Chinese viceroy, who, by the way, has about as much real authority in his province as one of those red-capped porters has in the running of a great American railroad terminal. The matter is very simple. Here is your foreign railroad, built with foreign capital, worked by foreign employees, being financed in the working by foreign money.

The branch of the railroad between Manchuria on the

eastern Siberian frontier and Popranitchnaia, the last station on the Maritime-Manchuria border, and the line south from Kharbin to Chang-Chun is known officially as the Chinese Eastern Railroad.

The building of this railroad was permitted by China; and she rashly sanctioned "railroad reservations" at certain points, bulbous swelling arteries along the railroad vein. China allowed a Russian "railroad reservation" at Kharbin where twenty-five years ago there was not a subject of the Tsar. So Russia builded thereon a little town, and kept its population down until her position was sufficiently assured for her to come out boldly and enlarge that town until to-day it is the capital of northeast Asia.

The houses are all Russian. The police are largely Russian. Kharbin is so Russian that they dare to hang printed notices in hotels telling you to lodge your Russian passport for inspection at the Russian police station before you have unstrapped your trunks. The colossal impertinence of the thing — Russian police surveillance in the heart of a Chinese province! This passport request, however, is a sheer bluff. We refused point blank to discuss our business or chat about passports with the policeman they sent to pay us a call at the hotel. He smiled, shrugged his shoulders and departed. We were not bothered again during our stay of several days. Mr. Fisher, the American consul-general of Manchuria, put up a long fight at Kharbin during his residence in the city to establish the right of the American citizen to refuse to submit to this humiliating Russian police surveillance. The Russians hit back, literally as well as metaphorically, for the consul's life was made a burden to him, and on several occasions mud and stones were thrown at him in the streets.

A village scene in Manchuria

An archway in the wall of Mukden

One may spin a web of verbal felicities and pleasant diplomatic phrases to deal with the situation, but the cold, hard, bed-rock fact is that Russia is never going to evacuate the great city of Kharbin until, in the last event, she has made out a bill for her property there and had it settled without any discounts for cash or other economical amenities. Russia is not so blind to the advantages of subtlety as to pave her streets with silver and gold, and to set the bolts of her quays and bridges in collars of diamonds, but don't imagine that she is slothful in enhancing the face value of her property.

She is content with a very slight regard for appearances, content with veiling the nakedness of her designs in the most summery of gauzes. The Imperial Government at Petersburg is the railroad, and the railroad is collecting, with the vigor of an enthusiast, anything Kharbinian and tangible you care to offer it provided only that that thing is rooted firmly and squarely in the soil of the city, and that it can be heavily priced in the event of a sale valuation. Not only will the railroad buy, but it will build and is building, plenty of solid, substantial, cosy hotels, blocks of offices, and fine residences. It has recently run up a "merchants' exchange" that would suit Chicago. It owns in Kharbin a Chinese daily newspaper and a Russian daily whose reassuring lies, in a vain effort to avert damage to railroad passenger receipts, were the grim joke of the city during the early days of the plague. So you can see clearly that there is a nice little bill mounting up for China before she can gain the commercial ascendancy of Kharbin.

Even as Russia is playing this game in the north, Japan with no less skill and a good deal more blatant impudence, is following suit in the south. South of Chang-Chun the Japanese Government is the South Manchurian

Railway, a trunk line with three branches, in all 706 miles. According to its Articles of Constitution, the stock in this corporation can be held only by the Japanese and Chinese Governments and natives of those two countries. The S. M. R. owns and operates every public utility south of Chang-Chun. It controls, beside the transportation facilities of the railroad, the great Fushun coal mines that have a daily output of 6,000 tons, the hotels, hospitals, schools, telephone and telegraph systems, and the line of steamers running between Dairen and Shanghai and Dairen and Kobe. To this enterprising railroad is due the credit for the modernizing of Manchuria since 1904, for it must be remembered that at the outbreak of the war, many of Russia's plans for south Manchurian improvements were only on paper, and that the line from Kharbin to Port Arthur was hastily thrown down the peninsula to afford transportation for troops in the impending hostilities with Japan.

In addition to these two railroads there is a coalition of the spheres of influence in the Russo-Asiatic Bank, an institution founded originally to finance the railroad construction in Manchuria. This bank is a great power in the land. Its buildings in Irkutsk, in Kharbin, and in Dairen equal anything in New York or London.

During the past year Russia is reported to have entered into an *entente* with Japan. Since the spheres of influence already control Manchuria and Mongolia, it appears logical that these two nations should divide the land between them. To quote from the New York *Sun* dispatch of August 15, 1912: "Outsiders desirous of exercising political influence there or influence which can be said to have a political aspect, must apply to the two self-constituted guardians of the Pacific. No neutralization schemes such as Mr. Knox's Manchurian railway

project will stand any chance. They are eliminated already. The Far East is earmarked. The policy at present decided upon by Russia and Japan leads straight to the partition of Manchuria and outer Mongolia and to the overlordship of those two empires in China proper. The closing of the open door is absolutely certain."

This step, of course, is the result of the four powers having neglected to include Japan and Russia in their list of subscribers to the loan which was offered China after her revolution. Invitations to those two nations were belated, to say the least. Moreover, the purpose of the foreign four power loan was so obvious — to get a leverage under the Japanese and Russian position in Manchuria by assisting China — that it would have been exceedingly bad form for Japan and Russia to have been put on the list of subscribers. Nevertheless, those two nations were finally asked to join.

The reasons given for the Russo-Japanese alliance are that since these two nations are contiguous to China, they should be united in event of a great uprising imperiling foreign interests in Manchuria and Mongolia.

The question that naturally arises at this point is, what of China? Is she apt to boil over with her revolutions into Japanese and Russian territory?

He would be a fool, indeed, who would venture to prophesy with any show of assurance how the balance of power will lie in Manchuria and Mongolia at the end of the next fifty years, to predict who will be master in the land. Territorial rights, spheres of influence, and the doctrine of sheer "grab" have become extraordinarily intertwined. Manchuria since the Chinese Revolution, is nominally a free State. As a matter of fact, since Russia controls the northern part and Japan the southern, the Manchurian officials disappear from the scene with re-

markable celerity as soon as they happen to make themselves objectionable to their guests. Over Mongolia, Russia has a protectorate, and the population of that province, tired of being oppressed by the Chinese, is siding with the Russians in all Russo-Chinese disputes.

One thing seems certain. There is going to be serious trouble between Russia and China just as soon as China can get on her feet. That the new China has become obsessed with the lust for territory is evident from her recent attempt to add Tibet — hitherto an independent State — to her possessions. This in defiance of Great Britain, and the presence of large bodies of British troops on the Indo-Tibetan border, and in nonchalant disregard of warnings from the British War Office.

While in Kharbin we called upon three bankers, cool men of acumen, whose business in the capital of northeast Asia is to watch the racial trend of events and keep themselves closely in touch with the situation. This is what one of them remarked, and the statements of the other two were quite corroborative:

"The Russo-Chinese situation in Manchuria and along the northeast Mongolia frontier is very critical. War is bound to come. When, I cannot foresee — but the blow will fall suddenly. If it is to fall within the next ten years, Russia will most certainly come off victor, but she will lose an enormous sum in the cost of mobilization and operations, not to mention the injury to trade. And she will merely be left where she was before, painfully rearranging her household, until China feels strong enough to return to the attack.

"At the moment I have no hesitation in affirming that Russia and the Russians are hated by the Chinese of all classes. Indeed, feeling is strong, if subdued, against all foreigners.

"I regard it as significant that the Russian Minister of War, General Sukhomlinoff, has just completed a thorough tour of inspection of our forces and defenses in Manchuria, and that Admiral Gregorovitch, Minister of the Navy, leaves St. Petersburg in a few days to come out to Vladivostok on a similar errand." [1]

Said another banker, discussing the Japanese element in the situation:

"A Russo-Chinese war is certainly impending, I think. And it seems to me probable that urged on by the bellicose faction, the men who have assimilated enough modern ideas to feel keenly humiliated by the foreign occupation of Manchuria, China will open hostilities years before she should, were she prudent. When the trouble comes, it will be sudden.

"The real menace to the interests of the civilized world powers to be found in the Far East to-day, I believe, is the possibility of a great Chino-Japanese *entente,* China receiving with open arms modern Japan and all her psychological insight into the successful grafting on of the methods of modern civilization to the intense conservatism of the phlegmatic Orient."

And what of Japan's aims and policies?

Though Japan had not yet fully recovered from her financial losses due to her war with Russia, one is tempted to look with suspicion on her purpose in this recent *entente*

[1] Apropos of these visits it is interesting to note that Russia claims to have 500,000 troops east of Baikal Lake at this time of writing, is building substantial barracks for them, and has just finished making Vladivostok impregnable.

It might also be added that the topic of gossip going the rounds in Manchuria in 1911, gossip quite authentic, was that along her Manchurian railroad zone Russia had two regiments of troops more than are permitted by the Treaty of Portsmouth, and Japan an entire battalion.

with Russia. At all events, the Japanese, unlike most of the world's people, will not talk politics. Half a dozen British, German and American consuls and business men located in southern Manchuria confessed that the political opinions of the educated Japanese with whom they were acquainted were a sealed book to them. There is not much love lost between the lower class Chinese and Japanese in this territory, and the Japanese press quotes daily instances of high-handedness on the part of Chinese policemen who amuse themselves by arresting Japanese as suspects when upbraided by the magistrates for their sloth and incompetency. However, there is a prevalent opinion in well-informed circles that Japan aided the revolting element in China, financially and otherwise, for obvious reasons.

The improvements in southern Manchuria as planned by the Japanese Government and carried out by the South Manchurian Railway are evident as soon as one steps on the station platform at Mukden. There are streets and streets of substantial western buildings, and a lot of money has been sunk in street repairs and drainage and various municipal enterprises.

Mukden proper — the Chinese city of Mukden, home of the late reigning dynasty — is a long three miles from the station and the railroad reservation. At Mukden you run for the first time — coming from the west — into that comfortable symbol of the Far East, the *jinrickshaw*.

Mukden has cars, none of our ultra-modern, spick-and-span, enameled electric fopperies, such as are being installed by the mushroom civilization of the East. They are dirty old horse cars, and Mukden seems to be proud of the fact as indicative of the antiquity of her western institutions, such as she has.

The cars are decrepit, and sag near to the ground in front and behind. Their warning clarion is a brass bell, hanging by a bit of string from the purely ornamental steering lever which the Chinese driver, behind his mules, grips with dignity.

The points, the junction of side tracks, are navigated with touching simplicity. The trackman on duty carries a yard of steel line under his arm, as a sort of badge of office. When a car leaves his siding, he takes up a tall bamboo pole topped with a white signaling flag, and rears it on high. The line is clear! Far away in the distance, down the thronged native bazaar, appears an answering speck of white. "All clear!" Presently another car arrives. The trackman lays down his yard of rail at the points, and assisting nature, gets on the off side of the conveyance and shoves it with his shoulder. Simultaneously the driver and passers-by make a terrific onslaught with fists and feet — one man we noticed smote with a tall earthen pitcher — upon the unhappy mules. And thus is the trackside gained.

We had too much baggage and blankets to take a *rickshaw* to the native town, so we chartered a Chinese hack. The horses went very slowly, and the Celestial on the box kept crying, "*Ike! Ike! Ike! Yaha! Yoho!*" in a tone of pained remonstrance. "*Ike! Ike!*" is apparently the local term for "Get up — bless you!"

During this trip, by the way, we once started to memorize international hortatory exclamations to horses, but the effort came to naught. When we took to our cross-country ride through the Shilka Mountains in Trans-Baikalia, we found that a pliant willow twig did all that was needful in the augmentation of speed; and a good deal more on the bridle-path of a precipice on the Lamaskaia Mountains. But that is another story, and we took

it out of the stumbling ponies with compound interest when we got them down to the level again. In America we say "Get up!" and "Whoa!" In Russia you talk to the horse or shout snatches of song to hurry him, and, to slow down, you make a vibratory noise like "Br-r-r-r!" with your lips. Most of the Chinese drivers cry "*Yaha! Yoho!*" to hurry a horse. They do not have to make any remark to induce a Chinese horse to stop. They simply stop shouting "*Yaha!*" and the horse goes to sleep on the spot.

Presently the tall masts of the foreign consulates began to appear, each topped with a flag — the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, the Russian White, Blue and Red, the German Red, White and Black. Then we passed the Russian consulate, a villa slashed and ribboned in emerald green, primrose yellow, and a jumble of tints and hues to be equaled only by a certain row of little houses you will find a couple of miles down the road running south from Breda on the Dutch-Belgian border. There are, Heaven and Holland know, some hideous erections on the face of the earth, but the little Russian consulate at Mukden is an assault upon the very throne of reason.

On and on we were driven, until at length, we came to the great city wall, towering high over the housetops, crumbling age-old gray brick with shrubs and little trees springing from its many fissures. It is pierced with a dark tunnel, where a crudely lettered signpost, a scrap of unpainted board nailed crookedly across an upright, announced in straggling English characters, "Come in — on right side." A cosy invitation that, to be a model municipal welcome, lacked only an appended —"Hang up your hat and make yourself at home."

The native city, the core of Mukden, is quite Chinese. In Kharbin, though there are tens of thousands of China-

Afflicted plague patients awaiting inspection in the Mukden hospital

men in residence, you rarely see Chinese women. In Mukden they pass hither and thither as freely as in Tsitsikar. Russians are very scarce. There are some thirty Englishmen, and a dozen Americans in residence, half of them being missionaries, mission doctors, consuls and consular assistants.

The scene in the great shop-lined, booth-strewn bazaar is very animated and full of odd glimpses. Bird shops there are, of all kinds of little brown birds, with scarlet or blue collars, stomachers or breasts. No cages. Not till one drew very near was it apparent that each bird was tethered to his perch or the wrist of the shopkeeper by a tiny thread attached to a wee collar round his neck.

Many blacksmith forges in full blast are seen. At the doors, old men, too aged now to endure the fierce heat and the sweating turmoil of the anvil workers within, squat in the dust with a glowing brazier, a small anvil and files, making rude, loose-lipped iron scissors.

In a dingy little native shop where we were looking at odds and ends jumbled up on the rough shelves let into the dirty mud walls, a telephone bell shrilled into our ears from the gloomy recess. The people didn't know a word of anything but Chinese. They lived in their squalid little mud den after the manner of a hundred previous generations, squatted and slept on the mud floor and ate of unclean foods and drank of horrible water. Yet here they had their telephone! There was no hold for it on the mud wall. It was fixed to a post hammered into the floor.

A hawk, a big brown hawk with much shot-at, frayed wings, swept insolently down on its strong pinions and glided along only a yard over the heads of the street crowds.

Manchu women passed, with their towering coiffures

and cheeks a mass of cherry pink, puffing at their long pipes. The young women do not smoke much, and when they do, they generally use cigarettes — English cigarettes from Bristol.

At intervals there are booths of money changers. They are very necessary. Unless you are fortunate enough to be an arithmetical genius, making a purchase in Mukden is a sore affliction.

In Mukden you shop with Mexican dollars and half dollars, Russian *roubles,* half *roubles, kopecks* and notes of three, five and ten *roubles,* with Japanese *yens* and *sens,* Chinese *cash, candareens, jows, Kitaiski kopecks, chons,* old brass coins pierced with square holes, and a whole gamut of Chinese provincial paper money which will fluctuate twenty-five per cent. up and down in a day and which banks will not honor. Be assured, it is some mental strain to pull out a handful of well-mixed *chons* and *kopecks* and *candareens* and *roubles* and *jows* and *sens* and dollars and *yen* and *cash* and the powers above us know what else beside, and get anywhere near the sum you have in mind.

The Japanese are a pleasant people and passing courteous withal to the stranger within their gates. The porter at Mukden station, learning that we had not yet bought our tickets, disappeared into the office and came back with two very nice pink second class tickets to Dairen, clipped however in two places. These he offered us at greatly reduced rates. But we reluctantly declined, for though the destination was printed in English, the date was in Japanese.

Jack, as a fox-terrier, does not love the South Manchurian Railway. In Siberia, where railroad employees consider attention to duty a bore, you can kennel your dog

for a six-day journey on a clean linen-covered seat in your compartment, and the conductor never objects. But that is probably how the conductor's parents live at home — the pigs, the chickens, the ducks, the cats, the dogs and the turkeys all nestling cosily alongside Father and Mother, Ivan and Katerina, on the floor of the hut.

But the Japanese are zealots, and take trains and all the toys of western civilization very seriously. They won't let you sit on the steps of the end platform of the coach. They shut every window and every ventilator at dusk. They insist on fox-terriers being incarcerated in cages in the baggage car.

There are three classes of compartment. Taking the second as standard, the first offers practically the same accommodation, but it has nickel fittings instead of brass and an air of haughty, exclusive desolation. The third class is considerably cheaper and offers the most comfortable accommodation of the three for it affords the Russian third class convenience of shelf berths. These remarks, of course, apply to the ordinary trains: the sleeping coach expresses run only three times a week.

There were no Europeans in our car. We were Japanese, with a sprinkling of Chinese. Many of the Japanese, none of the Chinese, read magazines and newspapers. The most of us squatted cross-legged on the seats. On this night journey down to the Pacific, we rolled up in our rugs and slept under the seat, or rather, under a series of three back-to-back seats.

Chapter XVI

THE JAPANESE IN DAIREN

WE, at home, associate Port Arthur (Ryojun) with Japanese development in her newly conquered territory on the Asiatic mainland across the Yellow Sea. That is an error.

Japan is making her commercial and residential capital at Dairen (Ty-lien to the Chinese; formerly Dalny to the Russians), Dairen picturesquely situated in a deep, land-locked harbor, thirty miles away to the east. And a very good colonial capital she is making of it, too.

Dairen has none of the depressing atmosphere of colonial Russia. Her people are all full of the joy of living. They have adopted the English tongue with Anglo-Saxon institutions and Anglo-Saxon dress for men. In spite of frequent accidents — as witness signboards crying "Rarber" and "Bar Ber" and "Boot and Shoemakea"— the adoption is successful.

While the Russians laid well the foundations of the city, the houses built since the war are substantial modern brick and stone structures that would do credit to New York or London. The pavements are smooth, well-fitted slabs of granite and concrete. Many streets are as smooth as billiard tables, and clean, deep drainage conduits line them. There is an excellent electric trolley system with large, swift, comfortable cars of the type to be seen on our interurban lines. They have the sensible plan of charging four *sen,* about two cents, for any num-

ber of rides on any number of routes during the thirty minutes succeeding the issue of the ticket. And the system is deriving large profits from running fast freight cars at lower tonnage rates than even coolie bullock carts, a hint that our own municipalities might study with advantage.

The town is well lit by electricity, and automatic telephone boxes crop up on street corners. There is a little four page sheet of a newspaper in English every evening, and a couple of well-printed Japanese dailies with some of the finest photographic reproductions we have ever seen.

The little English newspaper is quite well done for a paper produced daily in a rush by an entirely foreign staff. One wishes, however, that it would not tack "Rev." on to the names of long dead dignitaries of the Buddhist Church. It does not enhance the dignity of the affair to write of deputations paying a visit to "the shrine of Rev. Ekko," the said good abbot having died some hundred years B. C. Apperceptive readers may care to see what this journal has to say in the issue of June 6 on the subject of life's little worries at a Japanese telephone exchange:

". . . Lady supervisors will be seen nearly at all times walking back and forth behind the operators' chairs, watching over the manner in which the girls do their work and putting in a word or two, when necessary, to give a hint or a piece of mind.

"When a particular section is crowded with a rush of business, it will often be transferred to another section which is comparatively leisurely.

"The third lady acts in the capacity of chief operator whose duties are to enquire into 'engaged' cases, to ring up a subscriber whose tel. no. is unknown to the sender

of an intended message, and to give attention to the other complaints about the service in general, subject to the direction of the man supervisor.

"Some of the clients seem to persist in their misunderstanding that all the girls in the telephone service are operators, and when they wish to secure connection with the complaint clerk and are answered by her, they jump to a conclusion that the operator against whom they have a grievance is impersonating the clerk, and under this misunderstanding, lose their temper and hurl vicious language at the innocent party."

So here is another bond of fraternity between faraway Dairen and Detroit, a meeting ground of East and West.

The editor of the *Nishi Nishi Shimbun* (The Manchurian *Daily News*) was good enough to take us over his office one day.

The *Nishi Nishi* goes to press each night on the crest of a wave of beer. Every man in the editorial rooms from the assistant editor to the cub reporters had two or three bottles of "Ashai" lager on his desk. Corkscrews were *de trop* by common consent. Bottles were all opened by the simple expedient of banging off the necks against the leg of a table. The place was ankle-deep in broken glass, and one imbibed internal lubrications by tilting the jagged neck of the bottle to his lips.

The press rooms, where the paper is printed, were a curious sight. Linotypes are of no use to a Japanese newspaper. There seemed to be acres of type fonts about. The editor told us his journal had to keep in stock somewhere between thirty and forty thousand different types. There are fonts of wood types for words in common use, and others of words used in scientific, agricultural and technical subjects. If an aspiring young Japanese journalist who decides to take a short-cut to fame by using

A bird's-eye view of the bridge in Dairen, a city which since the war has been greatly modernized

strange and bizarre expressions turns up at the office of the *Nishi Nishi Shimbun,* they give him a special type rack all to himself; when the foreman printer gets hold of one of Mr. Otikuro's effusions, it is accordingly a comparatively simple matter to reduce to cold print. A short story writer might do worse than take the theme of how Otikuro was ruined on the night of his great news "scoop" by a jealous colleague's theft of his rack of steel expressions.

The printers' devils of the *Nishi Nishi* are dainty little mites of Japanese girls, tots about three feet tall, clad in beautiful kimonos aflame with brilliant colors. Squeaking like mice, they skuttle to and fro with sheaves of copy and galley proofs, so tiny that they take bee-lines under tables and type-desks without any fear of banging their silky little black topknots.

The proof readers are older girls. Sitting there among the familiar paraphernalia of a modern newspaper office, clad in pretty native robes, they gave an odd air of unreality to the scene.

To enter a Dairen bookshop is to realize far more vividly than you could by any amount of vague rumor, the incredibly swift superficial Westernizing of Japan. The bookshop, one of a number, is far better equipped than any you could find in towns of the size in America or England. At first glance one assumes that the books are English and American. There are all the dainty cloth and leather bindings that have come to us within the past two or three years, hosts of neat pocket editions, too. But an examination shows them to be Japanese, produced and printed in the tongue of Japan. Not that English and American books are absent — far from it. But they are not frivolities. Several shelves will be found crammed with text books, books on all conceivable topics and all

instructive — business manuals, shorthand, nautical terms, engineering, survey work, topography and literature. School readers, plays of Shakespeare and Ibsen, readings from the classics, dictionaries and phrase books galore, and sketches of philosophers and philosophy are as the sands of the sea.

Yet with all her Westernizing, Dairen has quaint incongruities here and there in the course of her daily life that amuse the Western eye. One morning we passed a gang of coolies, superintended by a Japanese foreman in English attire, engaged in constructing a fence around a coal-yard, a coal-yard full of modern machinery and mechanical devices. They were laboriously cutting three mathematically exact slots in every wooden upright, slots through which to pass the parallel rails. Nails cost no more in Dairen than in New York, and the job could have been done in a tenth of the time by nailing on the rails. Yet the men and their masters, steeped in an age-old instinct, were erecting their fences as their forefathers erected their fences three thousand years ago.

The Chinese coolies do all the unskilled labor of the town, go a-fishing and pull the *rickshaws*. Horse-drawn conveyances are few. Mules draw most of the freight loads, and the *rickshaw* coolies with their smart, green-hooded little vehicles, whirl you up and down town for a few cents.

Dairen is a beautiful spot. All around are the mountains, small mountains, often only hills, but cast in the true conical mountain mold and always visible from the streets in the center of the town. From a house roof, as your glance sweeps around the four points of the compass, you can actually count some dozen distinct peaks.

The water front is delightful — unspoilt by any regular road — a strip of rocky beach crowded with quaint

craft and fishing gear, redolent with the concentrated effluvium of salt breeze, seaweed, fish and drying nets. Here and there is a spit running out from the land, thronged with every imaginable type of Eastern boat from the great Canton junks with their mountainous windowed sterns — almost replicas of the little vessels of Columbus — and puddling, square-sailed surf prows, to a sprinkling of noisy, ultra-modern, steel-plated motorboats.

Now and then a tiny deserted bay of jagged rock with giant slabs of uptilted green slate strata running far out, spangled with myriads of little pink and white oysters. Three miles across the bay, the mountains. Between, and to the east, the ocean, the Pacific, silver at dawn, a deep, deep blue through the sunny hours, and mauve webbed with wreaths of fluffy white sea fog as the Eastern dusk creeps rapidly down at the close of day.

It is Dairen's joyful pride that she has the only "Electric Park"— dreadful term! — in Manchuria. Up on the slopes of a little hill to the west of town overhanging the sapphire bay the Japanese have builded unto themselves a pleasure resort with shooting range and bowling alleys, concert hall and restaurant, skating rink and monkeys in a cage, "donky ride 5 minit 5 sen," and a roaring, ramping merry-go-round from Fuji's Olympian prototype, Coney Island. But the Japanese have that esthetic instinct which smooths down the crude and ugly features of even an "Electric Park."

They have terraced the hill, sunk hollows and filled a water-lilied pond, and planted a little menagerie of apes and cranes and bears on the eastward slope. Little walks hemmed in by bamboo stalks and millet straws meander dreamily through groves of flowering shrubs and mossy stunted trees.

All Japanese Dairen troops up to Fuji Hill of an evening, a quiet, smiling, happy crowd, the men bringing their babies when the wife is too busy to come. The entrance fee to witness all these delights is just five *sen,* a little over two cents. For the same sum you can hire skates and rink for a couple of hours, or enjoy "5 minit" of delirious bliss on "donky," the merry-go-round, five shots in the shooting range, and other distractions. For nine *sen* Dairen can sojourn in a native booth and sup off three eggs, lemonade or tea, and two rice cakes.

The merry-go-round is very popular. The little oval-chinned, dark-eyed women, babies in the sashes on their backs, one hand leading an animated doll of a child in a flowered robe, wander up to the turnstile, and, after a great-to-do of larking and laughing, off goes a happy load to the jerky blare of "La Petit Tonquinoise."

Yet it was due to the training of these childish mothers that the bleeding sons of Japan hurled themselves over the mangled corpses of their comrades into the inferno at Port Arthur, thirty miles over those silent hills to the westward, and wrested from Lord Wolsey's "slumbering lion" the supremacy of northeast Asia!

The last week in May was very gay in Dairen. Three big celebrations came together — Navy Day, the birthday of the Empress of Japan, and a festival of the local Buddhist temple. At every twenty feet along nearly every street of the town, large white paper lanterns were hung, white lanterns lettered in black and emblazoned with the red rising sun of Imperial Japan. For three days the temple had a highly decorated shrine on wheels towed through the thoroughfare by lines of little boys. Constant, and only too eager, relays of small youths officiated as orchestra. Three or four sat in the cart, under the garlanded trappings, and made hideous music by a pro-

miscuous banging upon drums, clashing upon cymbals and tapping upon wooden gongs. Day and night for three days this wretched conveyance played. Its only happy feature was the Buddhist priest in charge.

How do you picture a Buddhist priest of southern Manchuria? Probably as a hermit-like figure clad in the long flowing robes of the East. As a matter of fact, the good cleric was garbed in a sloppy black frock coat and trousers, tan shoes, and, jammed over the back of his head, a black derby hat, dusty and two sizes too big for him. He wore a red flower in his buttonhole and he pulled incessantly at a cigarette that drooped wearily from a corner of his mouth. He would have passed for a Semitic auctioneer of old clothes on the East Side of New York.

Visitors to Dairen who are unaccustomed to the manners and customs of Japan will get a shock at the cosmopolitanism of the Japanese public bath. The Japanese, men and women, boys and girls, bathe together in a common bathroom, clad in what the Indians call "all face," and on hot summer nights, the side partitions of papered lattice are shot back and the courtyard outside is turned into a sort of "sitting out" lounge for bathers. Nor are the Japanese superficial bathers. Mr. Hibbard, director of the Dairen Y. M. C. A. says that his boys and men bathe in water of 110 degrees and will shout that they are freezing to death if the water gets below 96 degrees.

Some of the waiters at the hotels know little English and one has to pick up a smattering of pidgin English to establish much of an intelligent *entente* with them. Pidgin English is not, as is sometimes supposed, a mere gibberish that can be evolved on the spur of the moment. It is quite a little tongue of its own. A bishop in pidgin English is a "number one topside joss pidgin man."

Baptists are "largee wash mans" and Anglicans, "smallee wash mans."

One morning we got into difficulties over the marmalade question. We wanted marmalade and they brought us jam. The little waiter seemed puzzled over marmalade. With an explanatory gesture we repeated: "Marmalade. Marmalade. Kind of jam, you know."

He disappeared, to return with a long face, "No can do Jamyouknow. No can do."

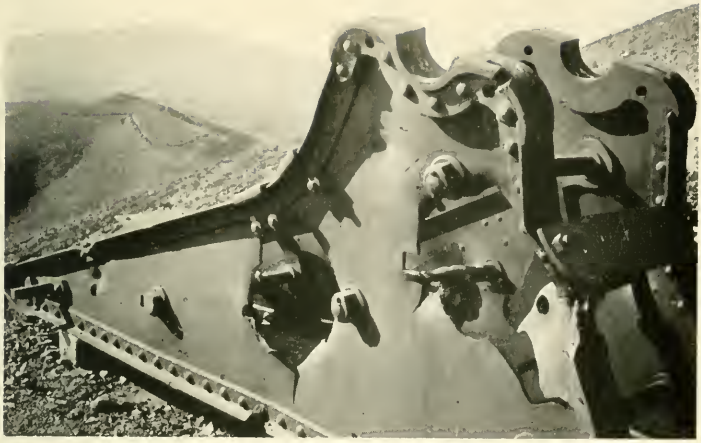
The Japanese have got up a local guide to Dairen that visitors should on no account miss. The advertisements bear careful perusal.

There is Mr. Mori, for instance. Mr. Mori runs a "Chop-House" up in town opposite the dwarf-tree mart. He announces in his advertisement, that he is eager to supply:

"All kinds of fish,
All kinds of meat,
All kinds of Partly and
All kinds of Vegetables."

We went to the Mori Chop-House and tried our best to obtain just a few kinds of "Partly," but the mystery could not be solved. Mr. Mori, by the way, is naïvely candid anent his spirituous liquors. His port wine the menu terms "part wine" and we think this must be correct. The fare of the restaurant includes "Shirinp and Clab salds," "Srow or Cucamber salds," "Chanpen Cider" and "Mineral Water Paint Bottle."

And there is the "Public Saloon in the Electric Park." Pathos and a genuine desire to please read through the lines of its announcement: "We arranged a large dining room which admits fifty persons . . . BAR and BATHROOM." What admirable insight into the needs of a thirsty generation! Presumably when your internal ca-



An enormous steel gun carriage torn like a sardine tin

Where the Russian General Kondrachenko fell in the siege of Port Arthur

pacity is taxed to its fullest limits, you adjourn from the bar to the bathroom and bathe in lager, imbibing, as the bullfrog, through the pores of the skin.

The advertisement continues:

"WE SUPPLY FRESH BEER AT OUR NEWLY ERECTED MILK HALL."

How exquisite a convenience! Mr. Jihei Kano, leaving his wife and the missionary on the park bench, watching with eloquent approval his no uncertain footsteps making a bee-line for the "Milk Hall," finds all the sweet solace, gallons upon gallons of it and "fresh."

Here is another Japanese advertisement in this guidebook, but one which we shrewdly suspect did not bring in the anticipated returns:

"Taking the Golden Opportunity of the Arrival of the American Fleet, we should like to make the following advice to Officers and Marines. They had better drink our artificial or BEAN MILK, which is invented by a Japanese doctor. We supply this substantial food at 4 sen per bottle."

The sight of the president and directors of a big railroad giving themselves away is, alas, an all too-frequent spectacle nowadays. The habit seems to have spread to the Far East, for we have it on the authority of the author of this sketch of Dairen life that here "Regattas take place twice yearly, once in spring and once in autumn, and the president and directors of the South Manchurian Railway Company present themselves to the regattas."

The South Manchurian Railway Company, by the way, does everything but bring you into the world at Dairen and up through southern Manchuria. To be explicit, it

frames and administers laws, collects taxes, administers police, runs a steam laundry and a crematorium, manages municipal street watering carts, owns and operates the only glass factory in Manchuria, owns and operates a silk reeling factory, administers all schools, the great Port Arthur Engineering College, the Mukden Medical College, owns and operates the Fushun coal mines, has an archeological and industrial museum at Dairen, runs hotels and hospitals, publishes two daily newspapers, controls the rubber-tired *rickshaws* and the agricultural experimenting station at Dairen, a plague segregation camp, a seashore resort, trolley lines, steamer lines, local and long distance telephones, gas and electricity, and the Fuji "Electric Park."

In fact, you have to be a good, all-'round man to make a success of your railroad career at Dairen.

Chapter XVII

SEVEN YEARS LATER

BARE, steep hills, gashed to the bone, to the living rock. Huge drifts of mangled steel and shattered concrete. Acre upon acre of hillside crushed to road-metal. Never a tree. Never a bush. Valleys of death. Here and there the crumbling foundations of house walls. Sparsely grassed valleys, scarred and pock-marked at every few feet with bare, stone-hollows. Port Arthur, seven years after the most terrible siege chronicled in history.

In most instances of modern times, no sooner has peace been declared between two combatants than steps have been taken to delete the dreadful traces of war. The scenes of fierce encounters and stubborn sieges in Alsace-Lorraine, in Cuba, and in South Africa have to-day little more than their artificial monuments to recall their past.

Japan has other ideas about Port Arthur. Beyond clearing away the dead, taking sanitary precautions to purify the battlefields and shattered forts of the district, and occupying the strategical positions at either lip of the harbor mouth, she has done very little to obliterate the grim traces of the price she had to pay for her victory.

The town of Port Arthur itself has been cleaned up sufficiently for occupation. Schools have been started, an Engineering College instituted, the little park on the main road Nipponized, and a military museum for tourists set on a hill in the old town. In a field that one sees from

the car window as he comes into the narrowness of the hills there is laid out a Russian graveyard, an acre or so of three-armed crosses with a little shrine to mark the spot where the bodies of 14,631 Russian soldiers rest. And on a hill overlooking the town, the Japanese have raised their charnel shine topped by a tall shaft, a shaft in memory of the brave men, some 20,000, whose cremated remains lie beneath it.

Relics of the siege are scattered on every hand — great steel gun-carriages, torn like discarded sardine tins; guns with burst breeches or jaggedly rent at the tips of their muzzles; shells and projectiles of every size and in every state of crumbling, an unpleasant proportion, too, half-buried and unexploded, though a reward stands for the Chinese peasants who report their location; rusted bayonets, battered leaden and nickel bullets; broken rifle stocks; twisted leather boot soles; metal regimental badges; snapped sword blades and the hilts of what were sabers; and blanching bones, with here and there a grinning skull.

Port Arthur, seven years after the siege in which perished a tenth of a million men, is to-day undoubtedly the most menacing object lesson of the horrors of high-explosive warfare that exists on the face of the earth.

One's first, and, perhaps, one's most striking impression of the spot — always excepting a vivid consciousness of the littered, smashed countryside — is the narrowness of the mouth of the long spacious lagoon of a land-locked harbor. That gap of a couple of hundred yards of placid deep blue water between towering Golden Hill and the low, undulating ridge of Tiger Tail Promontory, seems so still and insignificant a corner of lonely Asiatic coast-line to have been for the most part of the year 1904 the principal focal point of interest for all the civilized peoples, the lock whose forcing would deprive Russia of her

Never a tree, never a bush; valleys of death

At the summit of 203 Meter Hill stands a low granite pedestal, bearing a great upended iron shell

dream of a warm-water Pacific outlet from January to December. Port Arthur is a seaport, but you cannot get within some distance of the sea for miles each side of the harbor, so intent are the Japanese on reserving absolute secrecy about the extensive coastline fortifications they are piling along the flanks of their naval base.

The Japanese have only just completed the clearing of the fairway, the raising of the ships to sink which and to bottle up the fleet of Russia cowering behind Tiger Tail Promontory, Junior Captain Hirose rushed in under the outpouring of all Hell, and perished in the attainment of the blockade.

Neither pen nor camera can depict the scene to-day at Tungchikuanshan, the celebrated "North Fort," in the burrowing arcade of which fell the gallant General Krondrachenko. It was here that the Japanese laboriously dug tunnels, charged them with 2,300 pounds of powder, and, with these gigantic mines, blew the fort to bits, killing or wounding every man of the little garrison of 320. There had been earlier mine operations in and around the fort, both sides tunneling. The Japanese sappers had lengths of cord tied to their ankles and asked their comrades to pull back their corpses when the Russian mine should explode. They knew what would be their end, and sure enough, on October 27th it came. All were killed.

Two miles inland from the harbor 203 Meter Hill rears its gaunt head above the encircling heights. Our *rickshaw* coolies brought us up the winding granite ribbon road away from the little town, past the last mud-walled Chinese farmlet, into the region of shell-swept desolation. We left them and toiled up the littered zigzag trenches that creep toward the twin summits.

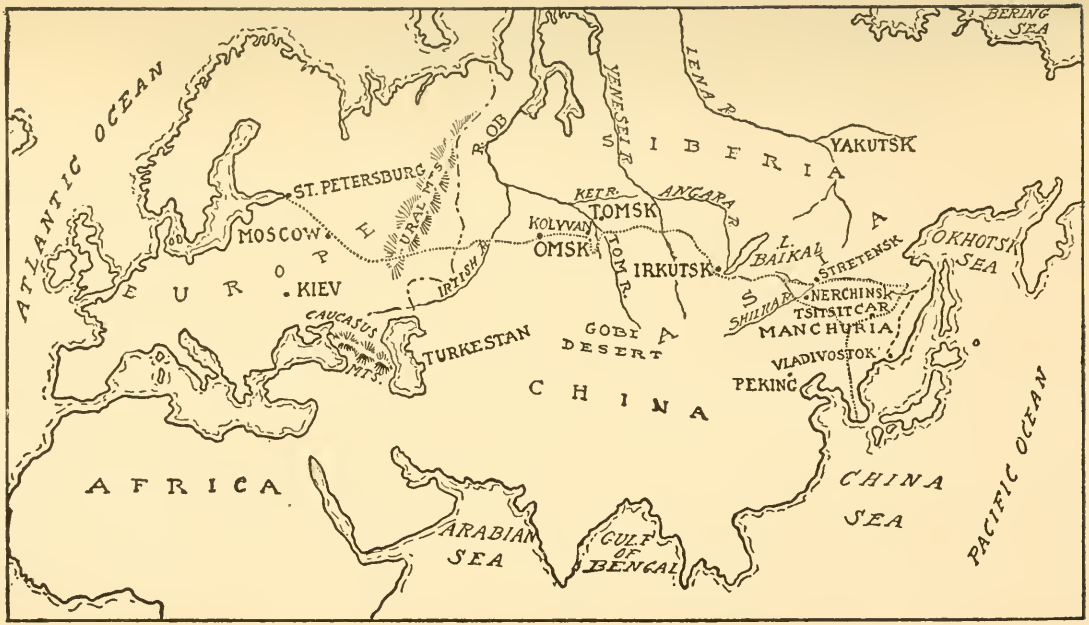
Ton upon ton of mangled corpses did the combatants

bear away in those dark days of 1904, but so thoroughly did the shell-fire churn up the ground that many skeletons remained imbedded in the soil till the rain erosion of the passing years should expose them. Here and there shows a skull; now a piece of shattered human hip bone; now a cluster of femurs and tibiæ. Many fragments of exploded shell, brass cartridge cases and the cartridge sockets of the automatic quick firing rifles; warped and twisted fragments of shoes.

It was a bleak, sunless day. Halfway up the hillside — so steep one could only just manage to scramble up it — we came into low clouds of woolly white sea fog, drifting inland from the Gulf of Pechili. A hundred feet higher, and every sound from the town in the valley below had hushed out of hearing. An impressive, utter stillness — how striking a contrast with the thundering, death-belching tumult of seven years ago! — lay over shrouded 203 Meter Hill.

Higher and higher. Something loomed out of the fog ahead. A torn gun-carriage, resting on a pile of road-metal, shell-pulverized ironstone. A little farther, the summit.

Here has been erected a low pedestal of unornamented granite, bearing a great upended iron shell, in memory of those who fell in battle on those dreadful slopes. At its base, from the soil once shell-harrowed and blood-sown, has sprung a cluster of marigolds.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